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**‘Ell maistro dell anchona’ :
The Venetian Altarpieces of Bartolomeo Vivarini and their
Commissioners**

Volume I: Text

Susan Ruth Steer

**A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts.
History of Art Department, September 2003.**

c. 80, 500 words (main text)

Abstract

Described as the most commercially-successful artist in 1470s Venice, Bartolomeo Vivarini attained some of the most prestigious altarpiece commissions of the period in the city. He was a fine technician and he contributed to formal developments in Venetian painting, responded with sensitivity to the physical environments for which the altarpieces were made, and with versatility to his commissioners' differing tastes. Yet for historiographical reasons, from the sixteenth-century his work has been unfavourably received and, consequently, has been paid relatively slight attention by modern scholarship. Moreover, most scholarly output regarding Bartolomeo has considered questions of style and attribution, with little attention given to patronage.

Through close analysis of seven altarpieces made between 1464 and 1482 for private and corporate Venetian commissioners, this study reappraises Bartolomeo Vivarini's contribution, emphasising the prestige his works enjoyed amongst his contemporaries, and framing the altarpiece programmes in terms of commissioners' social values and spiritual and corporal concerns. As the integrity of the altarpieces and their original environments have generally been compromised, each case-study commences with a 'reconstruction' of these through primary and early published sources. And because very little or nothing was known about the circumstances of many of the commissions, extensive archival research has been fruitfully undertaken to confirm or correct the identity of the altarpiece commissioners and to reconstruct, as far as possible, the commissioning motives and circumstances. In conjunction with studies in Italian social and cultural history, early sources have also been used to illuminate the way the altarpiece programmes and formal qualities reflected the particular preoccupations and tastes of their commissioners, and to set these more generally in the *quattrocento* Venetian context. Given his commercial success, the study also considers the artist's shrewd business tactics, including his use of personal networks to gain new commissions, and his discrimination between different clients and markets.

In memory of Michael Smith

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree .

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED:  .

DATE: 26 September, 2003

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Introduction

*'...il migliore per avventura di tutti loro...'*¹

Bartolomeo was the middle member of the Vivarini family of painters and, according to seventeenth-century critic Carlo Ridolfi, 'the best, perchance, of them all'. Together with the rival Bellini family, the Vivarini dominated the Venice altarpiece market from the 1440s to the end of the fifteenth century and also made numerous works for export. This study examines the Venetian altarpieces of Bartolomeo, among the artist's best and most important surviving works, made in the period from the mid-1460s to the early-1480s when the artist enjoyed enormous commercial success. The artist's Venetian altarpieces may be identified and examined as a distinct group, in the first place because the artist himself discriminated between the altarpieces he painted for the local market and the many works he and his assistants produced for export and, secondly, because identifiably Venetian social mores and piety influenced the forms and iconographies of the altarpieces he made for local clients. The study therefore considers how the altarpiece programmes and formal qualities may have been informed by the commissioners.

The main chapters are organised chronologically to examine seven altarpieces in depth, being those reasonably extant works made for the local market by Bartolomeo working independently from his brother Antonio, where sufficient evidence could be found about context of the commission (chapters 1–7). It is, of course, regrettable that important aspects of the large oeuvre have necessarily been excluded from detailed discussion here, namely altarpieces Bartolomeo made in collaboration with Antonio Vivarini, altarpieces made for export, and numerous small panels of the Madonna. The introductory and concluding chapters are therefore also intended to provide a better idea of the range and wider context of the oeuvre. This introduction continues with a brief synopsis of the events of Bartolomeo's life and career until 1482, that is the artist's

¹ 'Bartolomeo fu il quarto (*sic*) pittore dei Vivarini, ed il migliore per avventura di tutti loro...'. Ridolfi (1999), I, p. 54.

biography up to and including the period in which he made the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, subject of the final case study here; there is also a brief review of the small Madonna panels and a general overview of the conditions of patronage and artistic production in late fifteenth-century Venice. Finally, the historiography is appraised, in order to better understand the reasons why modern scholarship has paid relatively scant attention to this successful artist who evidently enjoyed the esteem and custom of wealthy and eminent contemporaries.

Bartolomeo's Life and Work until 1482

Relatively few documents pertaining to Bartolomeo's life and work survive and, unexceptionally for a *quattrocento* Venetian artist, there is nothing which reveals the artist's own voice;² a summary documented biography is provided at appendix 1. From the late nineteenth century, Paoletti and Ludwig published a number of documents which helped to reconstruct the essential biography, as well as the record of the commission for the lost narratives for the Scuola Grande di San Marco.³ Forty years ago Sambin published the contract for the Metropolitan Museum's *Dormition of the Virgin* which was made in 1484 for the Carthusian monastery near Padua (fig. 8.01); the document is most significant for it is the only surviving contract for an extant, independent work by Bartolomeo. During the course of the present research an unpublished set of accounts was discovered to include payments for the construction of a patrician funerary chapel and its altarpiece painted by the unnamed 'master of the *ancona*'. The altarpiece is identified here as Bartolomeo's first significant solo commission, the *Polyptych of the Madonna* of 1464 (fig. 1.01), which is the focus of chapter 1. Other unpublished archival material has been considered here for the first time in relation to the work of Bartolomeo Vivarini, examined in order to illuminate the interests and concerns of the commissioners of the Venetian altarpieces and to reconstruct as far as possible the circumstances of the altarpiece commissions; in several further cases it is now possible to identify, or confirm the identities of, the altarpiece commissioners, and to better understand their motives in prescribing their particular altarpiece programmes.

² J. Steer (1982), p. 45, notes that the letter from Alvise to the *signoria* amounts to '...the only a surviving account of his artistic activity by a fifteenth-century Venetian painter'.

³ Biographical details are found in P. Paoletti (1895), pp. 18-20, and *idem.* (1929), p. 87; Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 259, n. 23 and p. 266, n. 40; Ludwig (1905), pp. 16-20. Contract details for narrative paintings made for the Scuola Grande di San Marco are cited in Paoletti and Ludwig (1894), p. 10, and *idem.* (1899), p. 266, n. 40.

Whilst paper documents naming Bartolomeo Vivarini are sparse, altarpiece inscriptions are an exceptional aid to the reconstruction of the artist's career. In her invaluable study of inscriptions on Venetian paintings, Matthew observed that since at least the 1440s the Vivarini shop took a lead in the formal development of the inscription, used on their altarpieces as an advertisement to potential customers.⁴ Adopting forms of inscription which linked him to the well-known Vivarini family brand, Bartolomeo promoted his updated version of the product. Usually his signature appeared in the Paduan fashion, in Roman lettering on a *cartellino* at the bottom centre of a work, the inscription could be in Vulgate or Latin, and the year in either Latin or Arabic numerals.⁵ Most significantly, the form varied according to whether a piece was destined for the home or export markets, with those for the local area being typically signed: 'BARTHOLOMEUS VIVARINUS DE MURIANO PINXIT' with the year of manufacture. Works made for export were usually inscribed: 'FACTVM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEUM VIVARINUM DE MURIANO' with the year, a means of informing potential clients where the studio was located, should they wish to send for an altarpiece.⁶ (The 'per' of the export inscriptions has been interpreted as an indication of works made by assistants under the master's name, although, as Griffiths observed, 'per' also appears in the inscription of the 1474 *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01) made for a family chapel at the church of the Frari, Venice, which is evidently an autograph work.)⁷ Of course, altarpiece inscriptions must have been an efficacious way of enhancing the painter's reputation, because of the works' location in ecclesiastical spaces where they could be seen by a wide audience.⁸ So consistently did Bartolomeo sign his paintings, that a lack of inscription on a substantial work attributed to him gives reason to question its inclusion in the oeuvre (excepting, of course, fragments, such as panels from dispersed polyptychs, or those with losses in the lower part of the central section).⁹

⁴ Matthew (1998), p. 620.

⁵ On the use of Roman lettering and the *cartellino*, Matthew (1998), pp. 620-22.

⁶ For an analysis of Bartolomeo's signatures, including two partial exceptions to the formulations, see Matthew (1998), p. 624 and pp. 644-45, notes 44-46. Rossi (1994), p. 104, discusses the inscriptions on works made for export to the Bergamo area.

⁷ Griffiths (1976) p.32; Rossi (1994), p. 104.

⁸ Matthew (1998), p. 620.

⁹ Matthew (1998), p. 643, n. 19 observed that in of a total of 36 works, 12 were unsigned, of which just one was an altarpiece. However, it is likely that the proportion of works originally inscribed was even higher than Matthew calculated. The altarpiece Matthew noted to be unsigned was perhaps the *Osimo Polyptych* which Massa (2000), p. 90, has recently shown was originally inscribed. The summary at appendix 2 indicates that the Vivarini signed all major altarpieces (discounting lost and damaged works). The remaining 11 unsigned works noted by Mathew were small panels of the Madonna and Child, but her calculations rely on Pallucchini's 1962 catalogue, which includes three questionable attributions (see below). Of the 16 Madonna panels listed in appendix 3 here, only five lack inscriptions, but the original

Bartolomeo was probably born around 1430;¹⁰ there is no record of his birth year, but his artistic maturity in 1450 (when his signature first appeared in Vivarini inscriptions) indicates he may have been about twenty years of age by that date.¹¹ It is likely that Bartolomeo and his older brother Antonio grew up on the Venetian island of Murano, where their father Michele worked in the Murano glass industry.¹² But documents, such as the 1463 will of Bartolomeo's wife or the 1484 contract for the *Dormition of the Virgin*, show that in adulthood the Vivarini brothers were mainly based in the metropolitan parish of Santa Maria Formosa, set between the commercial and political arenas of the Rialto and Piazza San Marco (fig. 4.02).¹³ As for the reference to Murano in inscriptions, 'da Murano' seems to have been used by the Vivarini as an alternative or additional surname at a time when the use of family names was still sporadic and inconsistent in Italy; Antonio and Giovanni typically signed 'IOHANES ET ANTONIVS .D[E]. MVRIANO...', and this was the general form used by Bartolomeo and Antonio (often with an indication of their fraternity), on the products of their joint enterprise: ANTONIO. / ET: BARTOLOMEO. FR[ATR]IB[US]. DE. MVRANO...'. In the document pertaining to works for the Scuola Grande di San Marco, Bartolomeo is called 'Bartolomeo da Murano'.¹⁴ Alvise Vivarini, Bartolomeo's nephew and pupil, would sometimes follow Bartolomeo's example in using Vivarini together with 'de Murano' in inscriptions, and styled himself 'Alvise Vivarin da Muran' in his petition to the *Signoria*, notwithstanding that he never lived in Murano.¹⁵ Probably because of the 'Murano' inscriptions, from the late-eighteenth century the spurious notion arose of the

proportion of signed works is likely to have been higher, given that some of these panels are damaged and have lost their frames.

¹⁰ After Longhi, Pallucchini (1962), p. 37, judged false an inscription on the lost *Lane Madonna* which implied the artist was born in 1432, and rejected the attribution of the work. Although Griffiths (1976), p. 5 and p. 38, n. 9, held the work and its inscription were genuine, in my opinion there is no stylistic reason whatsoever to accept it.

¹¹ A contract dated 1489, which records an artist identified only as Bartolomeo employing an apprentice, shows the apprenticeship began when the boy was ten years of age and would continue for ten years until he was twenty, by which time he was evidently expected to be fully accomplished. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 268, n. 45.

¹² Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 259, note 23.

¹³ These documents may be found at: Ludwig (1905), pp. 16-17, doc. 2; Paoletti (1895), p. 19; Sambin (1964), pp. 41-42, doc. 14. See appendix 1 for these and other examples. However, see the concluding chapter here for the possible significance of a late (1490) document published by Ludwig (1905), p. 17, no.12, which identifies the artist as 'Bartholomei Vivarini pictoris de Muriano'.

¹⁴ J. Steer (1982), p. 4 and p. 24, assumed the reference to Murano in inscriptions referred to the familial origins of the painters, not the location of the workshop. For the Scuola Grande di San Marco see above and appendix 1 here.

¹⁵ J. Steer (1982), p. 4; for examples of the form 'ALOVISIVS VIVARINVS / DE MVRANO...' and similar, *ibid.*, p. 127, cat. 1; p. 137, cat. 10; p. 131, cat. 16; for the petition, *ibid.*, appendix III, p. 97.

Murano School of artists, living and working on the eponymous island.¹⁶ To be sure, other artists of Muranese origins are associated with the Vivarini, such as Andrea da Murano and it may be valid to think in terms of a grouping of people of Muranese parentage working in Venice.

§

As was customary in Venice, the young Bartolomeo was almost certainly apprenticed to the family workshop, which comprised his older brother Antonio and his brother-in-law Giovanni d'Alemagna, probably the senior partner, and perhaps a number of associates, such as Leonardo Boldrin.¹⁷ As a young trainee, Bartolomeo probably helped erect the complex polyptychs of 1443 in S. Zaccaria (figs. 0.02-0.04), where he would have seen the characterful and highly sculptural saints by Andrea del Castagno in the vault (figs. 0.06-0.08; 1442, fresco, *in situ*) – figures which appear to have made a lasting impression on him. Indeed, Bartolomeo may have had the opportunity to become well acquainted with Castagno, as it has been suggested that Castagno worked closely with the Vivarini on the decorative project at S. Zaccaria, where Venetian guild rules might have obliged the Tuscan to work under the auspices of the local masters.¹⁸ After the completion of the 1446 *Carità Triptych* (Accademia, Venice), the Vivarini shop may have moved to Padua, which was perhaps Giovanni's home town and arguably the foremost artistic centre in North-East Italy; it is significant for his artistic development that Bartolomeo probably spent his formative years here.¹⁹ In 1447 Antonio and Giovanni made the *Nativity Polyptych* (fig. 0.05; National Gallery, Prague) for the Lion family chapel at the Paduan church of the *Fрати Zoccolanti*, San Francesco; as his training would now have been at an advanced stage, Bartolomeo would have assisted on this work.²⁰ Antonio and Giovanni joined the Paduan painters' guild as master painters at an unspecified date between October 20, 1447 and November 4, 1448, which suggests both intended a long sojourn in the city – contrary to Shaw's recent hypothesis that Antonio remained in Venice to run the *bottega* (workshop) there, while Giovanni

¹⁶ For example, Zanetti (1972).

¹⁷ Giovanni d'Alemagna's seniority in the workshop is argued by Griffiths (1976), p. 4, and Holgate (1999), pp. 30 ff.

¹⁸ See Holgate (1999), p. 163, for discussion of possible collaboration between the Vivarini and Castagno at S. Zaccaria.

¹⁹ Proposed by Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), pp. 78-81.

²⁰ Callegari (1995), pp. 7 ff.

ran the Paduan enterprise.²¹

If Bartolomeo's iconography would be informed by his Vivarini heritage, the distinctive graphic line, plasticity of modelling and sometimes fanciful description of classical architectural motifs was owed to contemporary works he saw in Padua, and his assimilation of the style typified by Pizolo (fig. 0.09) and Mantegna is *prima facie* evidence that he spent his formative years there. His affinity with the style is frequently observed, although suggestions he trained formally in the studio of Squarcione alongside Mantegna and Marco Zoppo may be disregarded. The copious sources regarding Squarcione make no reference to Bartolomeo, and such an arrangement would have been superfluous and anomalous given his family background. However, the Vivarini were evidently on good terms with Squarcione, as Giovanni witnessed a will together with Squarcione in 1443 and Antonio selected Squarcione as an expert witness in 1450 (see below).²² Given this familiarity between the Vivarini and Squarcione, it is quite possible the young Bartolomeo associated with his counterparts in Squarcione's *studium*, where he might have had access to the collection of casts and antique fragments which Squarcione kept as models for his students – the experience of drawing after these would have contributed to Bartolomeo's interest in classicising motifs, particularly pronounced in his early period, the lapidary modelling of his figures and the recourse he would take to sculptural models throughout his career.²³

The decoration of the Ovetari chapel at the church of the Eremitani in Padua was probably the most significant episode in Bartolomeo's artistic development (figs. 0.10 - 0.11) – although his contribution to the frescoes has been little discussed by Italian art historians, and simply dismissed by Anglophones. The extent of the work carried out on the chapel by the Vivarini shop is very problematic and, as it is the subject of Shaw's recent detailed examination as well as a paper by Holgate, further discussion would seem superfluous;²⁴ however, a brief review of the circumstances is necessary because accepted wisdom currently has it that Bartolomeo did not participate in the scheme – whereas, contrarily, the importance of the chapel to Bartolomeo's development and oeuvre will be asserted here.

²¹ The question of guild membership is noted in Odorici (1874), p. 122; Lazzarini (1908), pp. 77-78; Holgate (1999), p. 24. For the hypothesis Antonio remained in Venice, K. Shaw (1994), pp. 127-28.

²² For the will witnessed by Giovanni and Squarcione, see Holgate (1999), pp. 27-28, n. 21, and on the choice of expert witnesses, K. Shaw (1994), p. 120.

²³ Ames-Lewis (2000), pp. 52-58, describes Squarcione's employment of antique fragments and casts for training purposes.

²⁴ Holgate (2003a).

Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna contracted, in May 16, 1448, to decorate in fresco just over one half of the Ovetari chapel, including the vault which was to be frescoed with the four evangelists on a blue background with gold stars. Worth 350 ducats, the consideration was payable as an advance of 50 ducats for expenses, and thereafter by instalments according to progress. The remaining work on the scheme was entrusted to Andrea Mantegna and Nicolò Pizolo on similar terms.²⁵ As a member of the family studio, Bartolomeo surely participated in the chapel decoration where, had he not already done so, he would have learned fresco technique from his brother-in-law Giovanni, who was evidently in charge of the Vivarini contribution; Bartolomeo could also have become well acquainted with the style and technique of Mantegna and Pizolo. Although the scheme was due for completion in late 1450, the artists made slow progress and on 23 July 1449, fourteenth months after contracts were agreed, Giovanni received just 20 ducats for work to date (the other team were progressing little better).²⁶ Giovanni died in the spring of 1450 and, as his former business partner, on June 9 following, Antonio agreed for work-in-progress to be examined and valued with a view to being paid-off for the work accomplished. Antonio selected Francesco Squarcione as his expert witness, and Pizolo was consulted on the part of the commissioners. It was established that, of the decoration entrusted to the Vivarini, only the vault had received significant attention, but remained unfinished; so the parties agreed the Vivarini shop should finish the vault, after which Antonio would be paid an appropriate portion of the original contract price (about 90 or 100 ducats, less the 50 ducat advance and interim payment of 20), and Antonio would thereafter be free of further obligation.²⁷ Although it has been hypothesised that Antonio abandoned the unfinished vault immediately, there is every reason to believe the Vivarini *bottega* did fulfil its revised contractual duties.²⁸ Firstly, the documents are premised on the assumption Antonio would remain responsible for the completion of the vault as though he had expressed this intention, and it seems reasonable to assume Squarcione, as Antonio's representative, would have been cognisant if Antonio intended otherwise. Moreover, Antonio's personal attention on the vault was not mandatory and the work could have been concluded by an artist in his employ or association. By dint of the documented circumstances as well as his

²⁵ Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), pp. 83-84. See pp. 191-94 for a transcription of the original contract. Documents relating to the Ovetari chapel are usefully summarised in Lightbown (1986), pp. 388 ff.

²⁶ Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), p. 90; Lightbown (1986), p. 388.

²⁷ Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), p. 90; Lightbown (1986), pp. 390-91. K. Shaw (1994), pp. 121-23, provides a subtle analysis of the calculations.

²⁸ Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), pp. 91-93.

Paduan-informed style, Bartolomeo is the most likely artist to have completed the vault, and his contribution has been admitted by several scholars including Pallucchini, Padovani and Longhi.²⁹

Lazzarini and Moschetti instead argued that the Vivarini simply abandoned the project immediately, citing their important 1450 *Certosa Polyptych* (fig. 0.01; Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna), the inscription on which marked Bartolomeo's new status as Antonio's partner, and also indicated the manufacture of the altarpiece entirely in Venice; the scholars insisted it was logistically impossible for the Vivarini to meet their obligations in Padua and complete the altarpiece in Venice.³⁰ However, since the Ovetari vault was nearing conclusion by early June 1450 when progress was reported, Bartolomeo could well have finished the vault within a matter of weeks, returning to Venice to complete the Bologna altarpiece with Antonio.³¹ Alternatively, he could have collaborated with Antonio on the Bologna altarpiece and subsequently returned to Padua in 1451 to finish the chapel vault; this hypothesis is supported by Antonio's receipt of 10 ducats in respect of the chapel on November 27, 1451.³²

The death of Giovanni certainly brought about a stylistic change in the frescoes, which is particularly abrupt in the decoration bordering the vault ribs and the bases of the spandrels.³³ Although Holgate supposed the Evangelist roundels were completed by Antonio and Giovanni before the latter's death, he conceded they were 'difficult to reconcile with the surviving oeuvre' of Giovanni and Antonio;³⁴ indeed, most scholars associate the figures of the Evangelists, executed with crisp, Paduan plasticity, with a new artistic personality quite distinct from Antonio.³⁵ While Shaw accepted that

²⁹ Padovani (1971), pp. 25-26, n. 31. Longhi, cited by Padovani, gave his opinion in university lectures. Pallucchini (1962), p. 25 and pp. 107-8, cat. 86-89.

³⁰ The Bologna altarpiece is inscribed: ANNO. DOMINI MCCCCL. HOC. OP[US] INCEPTUM. FUT. ET. PERFECTUM. VENETIIS. AB. ANTONIO. / ET. BARTOLOMEO. FR[ATR] IB[US]. DE. MVRANO. NI[COLAO]. V^o PO[N]T. MAX^o. OB. MONVME[N]TUM. R.[EVERENDI] P.[ATRIS] D.[OMINI] NI[COLAI] CAR.[DINALIS] OLI[M]. S[ANCTAE] + [CRUCIS]. Cited Pallucchini (1962), p. 108, cat. 90, and Humfrey (with slight variations) (1993), p. 340, cat.1.

Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908), pp. 91-92

³¹ Although he did not admit Bartolomeo's involvement, K. Shaw (1994), p. 124, argued that work on the vault could have been concluded within weeks.

³² Some scholars have taken this payment as the approximate date of the tardy completion of the vault frescoes. K. Shaw (1994), p. 123, instead argued Antonio merely returned at that date to retrieve scaffold lumber and cash owing to him from the previous year. This may have been a convenient moment for Antonio to collect his timber, as he probably went to Padua with appropriate transport in order to install the 1451 high altarpiece at S. Francesco Grande.

³³ The portion of the *rinceau* decoration taken on by the new hand is detailed by K. Shaw (1994), p. 126.

³⁴ Holgate (2003a), pp. 12-13 and p. 26, n. 2.

³⁵ K. Shaw (1994), p. 128, supposed that Antonio had little or no hand in the Ovetari frescoes and had maintained the Venice studio, having delegated or sub-contracted the outstanding work on the vault.

Antonio did oversee completion of the vault, he left open the identity of the artist in Antonio's employ – except to dismiss Bartolomeo out of hand because of his supposed inexperience in fresco.³⁶ Instead, Bartolomeo had been well-placed to have learned the fresco technique from his brother-in-law Giovanni, as noted above.

It is most significant that the Ovetari Evangelist *tondi* bore an evident affinity with later works by Bartolomeo. For instance, the interior spaces described in them have similar characteristics to the setting of the Birth of the Virgin panel of the *Madonna della Misericordia Triptych* (fig. 4.11; 1475, Santa Maria Formosa, Venice), with a playful description of wood-grain patterns and blocky wooden furnishings which interrupt space with emphatic horizontals and sharp orthogonals, creating steep perspectival effects. The Evangelists closely correspond iconographically and physiognomically with saints in Bartolomeo's *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01). For instance, the *tondo* St Mark had dense curly dark hair and a widow's peak similar to those of his counterpart in the eponymous triptych; and the slightly severe and swarthy features of the *tondo* St Luke are also similar to St Mark of the triptych. The lion in the St Mark *tondo*, recalls St Jerome's lion in Bartolomeo's *Lussingrande Altarpiece* (fig. 0.14; 1476, Lussingrande parish church, Croatia), with its light muzzle and down-turned mouth. Similarly, the elderly St John the Evangelist closely resembles his counterpart in the triptych, with long white hair and beard, vertically furrowed brow, bulbous eyes with prominent lids, bags and crows' feet (figs. 3.25-3.26). Of the four evangelists in the vault, only St Luke appears in a costume with modern cuffs and buttons.³⁷ Of course, the detail of sleeve cuffs, buttons and the crease of fabric around the forearm arm is a recurrent motif in Bartolomeo's many depictions of the Madonna, such as the early *Virgin and Child with Saints Paul and Jerome* (fig. 0.23; National Gallery, London). In my opinion, the different treatment of the St Luke figure is not explained by the change in artistic personality as Shaw supposed; rather, the studied depiction of Luke as a contemporary artist painting a vivarinesque 'portrait' of the Madonna, may be owed to a young painter's self-consciousness in depicting the patron saint of the *mestiere* he had recently entered. For reasons of style and detail as well as circumstance, the lost roundels may thus be tentatively described as Bartolomeo's earliest distinct works.

³⁶ K. Shaw (1994), p. 128.

³⁷ K. Shaw (1994), p. 125.

In 1451 Antonio and Bartolomeo created a magnificent polyptych which must have been just as impressive as the Bologna altarpiece of the previous year. The new work was destined for the high altar of the Paduan church of S. Francesco Grande, where the Nativity altarpiece signed by Antonio and Giovanni had been installed in the Lion chapel four years previously. According to old sources the new high altarpiece (dispersed) was inscribed: MCCCCLI ANTONIUS ET BARTHOLOMEUS FRATRES DE MURANO PINXERUNT HOC OPUS.³⁸ It featured St Francis in the central panel of the principal order, flanked by other Franciscan saints, Anthony of Padua and Louis of Toulouse, together with Saints Peter and Paul. The upper tier showed the Virgin and Child flanked by four half-figures of saints, and above this a *cimasa* with the Man of Sorrows.³⁹

Throughout the 1450s until the middle of the next decade, Bartolomeo collaborated with Antonio making large polyptychs for the home and export markets. One prestigious undertaking was the high altarpiece of the church of the Carità (1453-56, lost). It is likely Bartolomeo participated in this work, notwithstanding that payment records for the altarpiece name Antonio only (which is unremarkable, given Antonio's status as senior partner). Like the rest of the decoration in the *cappella maggiore*, the altarpiece was funded by the Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità which had commissioned the Vivarini to make the famous *Carità Triptych* for their *albergo* (confraternity building) a decade previously. The large high altarpiece, of carved gilded wood with painted panels was perhaps similar to those made by Antonio and Giovanni for S. Zaccaria. Side panels were occupied by various saints, and at the centre the Virgin appeared, bearing the *ruota* of the Carità (the 'wheel' symbol of the *scuola*, formed of concentric circles quartered with a cross). Given the iconography employed on various lapidary carvings on *scuola* property about the city (fig. 4.24), the Virgin almost certainly appeared in the form of the Virgin of Mercy, protecting Carità members under her cloak.⁴⁰ The work, like many contemporary polyptychs, was provided with a *cassa* – a wooden casing which served to protect protruding elements as well as functioning as a 'highly effective foil against which to offset the brilliance of the gilding'.⁴¹

³⁸ Zeri (1988), p. 161.

³⁹ For the 1451 polyptych including identification of some of the dispersed panels, see Zeri (1988).

⁴⁰ For the documentation, likely form and iconography of the altarpiece, Fogolari (1924), pp. 77-79.

⁴¹ Humfrey (1993), p. 51.

Independently, Bartolomeo made small-scale devotional panels depicting the Madonna and Child (discussed in a separate section below). But his earliest independent panel on a larger scale is an unusual image depicting the saintly Observant Franciscan John Capestran (fig. 0.12; Louvre), inscribed: OPVS . BARTHOLOMEI . VIVARINI . DE . MURANO . 1459. The provenance of the *John Capestran* reaches back no further than the nineteenth-century to the Campana collection, Rome, but there can be little doubt it was originally commissioned by Franciscan Observants, probably as part of a promotional campaign for Capestran's beatification. The necessarily novel iconography and the specificity of the inscriptions, which identify Capestran and commemorate his death, indicate the artist was carefully directed by his commissioners.⁴² Throughout their careers Antonio and Bartolomeo made a number of altarpieces depicting Franciscan Observant saints, generally for export to dispersed locations, which indicates that they benefited from recommendations made through the Observants' own network.⁴³ The *John Capestran* merits further investigation because of its unusual form, unknown provenance and function, and its distinct iconography.⁴⁴

From the early-1460s as Bartolomeo gained his foothold in the market, he increasingly worked independently from Antonio. The last known altarpiece the brothers made in collaboration was the *Osimo Polyptych*, its erased inscription was recorded in a seventeenth-century source: ANTONIUS ET BARTOLOMEUS DE MURANO PINXERUNT 1464 (fig. 0.13; Palazzo Municipale, Osimo).⁴⁵

From the will of Bartolomeo's wife Caterina, we learn that by early 1463 the couple were married.⁴⁶ They were living in the parish of Santa Maria Formosa and Caterina was expecting their child; like many women of the period, she had written her will cognisant of the dangers of childbirth. This was probably to be their first child, for the testament mentions no existing offspring. Later documents indicate the couple would have a son, 'Z[uan] Alvise Vivarin q. ser bortolomeo' (d. 1523), and daughters Lucia,

⁴² On a low wall behind the saint: beatus Joh[an]es . de. Capistrano ord[in]is m[i]norum de obs[er]va[n]tia obiit .1456. di a/n[n]o . 23.Ottobris. In hu... (?) u[n]gari. On a *cartiglio* framing the top of the rectangular panel: .DEO . AUT[EM] . GRATIAS . QUI . DEDIT . NOBIS . VICTORIAM . P[ER] . J[ESUM] C[HRISTUM] . DO[MI]N[UM] N[OSTRUM] (1 Corinthians, 15:57).

⁴³ Griffiths (1976), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Pallucchini (1962), p. 116, cat. 133 and Brejon de Lavergnée and Thiébaud (1981), M.I. 488; Bisogni (1985), pp. 242-44, discusses the iconography.

⁴⁵ Massa (2000), p. 90 and p. 99, n. 23, citing L. Fanciulli *Osservazioni critiche sopra le antichità cristiane di Cingoli*, Osimo, 1769, p. 178.

⁴⁶ The date 1463 cited here assumes that given by Ludwig as 8 January, 1462, is *more Veneto*. Ludwig (1905), p. 16, no. 2. Due to the poor condition of the contents of the relevant ASV file, I have been unable to view Caterina's will.

Cristina and Elisabetta.⁴⁷ It may have been in the early 1460s that Bartolomeo became a *confratello* of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, of which his name appears undated in a register of members.⁴⁸ The prestigious confraternity would prove an important source of direct and indirect commissions for the artist. The 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* (fig. 1.01; Accademia, Venice), probably Bartolomeo's first important solo work for the Venetian market, was made for a Procurator of St Mark's, who was also an ardent *scuola* member (chapter 1).

The following year Bartolomeo made the so-called *Naples Altarpiece* (fig. 7.13; Museo di Capodimonte, Naples), probably for the principal Dominican church in Bari, southern Italy.⁴⁹ It has been acknowledged that the altarpiece was the earliest Venetian single-field *sacra conversazione*;⁵⁰ the exuberant classicising decorative motifs, including the festoon of fruit and the fictive carving on the Virgin's throne, shows the artist's continuing engagement with the Paduan style. The contrast with the restrained and formally conservative *Polyptych of the Madonna* of the previous year serves to highlight the artist's versatility in treating these similar subjects. However, both altarpieces illustrate one of the most idiosyncratic and interesting characteristics of Bartolomeo's work – the preternatural quality of the figures, achieved by juxtaposing naturalistic detail with the evidently artificial, such as the *trompe l'oeil* naturalism of the Virgin's robe falling on a convincing marble surface, and the plasticity of the Virgin and Child whose flesh paradoxically seems modelled from porcelain.

In 1468 Bartolomeo was engaged by the Scuola Grande di San Marco to contribute to a series of narrative canvasses depicting scenes from the Old Testament and the Passion for its *sala capitolare* (chapter hall). It was documented that Bartolomeo and Andrea da Murano would produce a narrative canvas in two fields with scenes from the life of Abraham.⁵¹ Given that adjacent scenes were taken from the Passion, it seems likely that one or both of the Abraham narratives depicted the prefiguring Sacrifice of Isaac.

⁴⁷ For Zuan Alvise and Lucia Vivarini, P. Paoletti (1895), p. 20; for all four children, *idem.* (1929), p. 87 (un-referenced); also, appendix 1 here.

Note: 'q[uondam]' placed before a patronym indicates the named person's father was deceased; conversely, where a patronym is preceded by 'de', the named individual's father was still alive at the date of the document.

⁴⁸ ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, 4, 19v. First published by P. Paoletti (1895), p. 19.

⁴⁹ Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat. 8.

⁵⁰ Humfrey (1993), p. 186; *idem.* (1994), p. 16.

⁵¹ See above and appendix 1 for references. The document is dated 10 January 1467 (1468 assuming *more Veneto*). P. F. Brown (1988), pp. 45-48 and pp. 269-70, read the specified subject not as a 'la istoria de buram' (improbably interpreted in Paoletti and Ludwig as a history of the Venetian island of Burano), but rather 'la istoria de bramo' – Abraham.

Bartolomeo and Andrea's membership of the Scuola probably facilitated their securing the important contract of the Abraham narratives;⁵² other members included Giovanni and Gentile Bellini, who also earned commissions for narratives in the *sala capitolare*.⁵³ It is indicative of the regard in which Bartolomeo was held that the contract specified that he and Andrea would be remunerated *pro rata* the same consideration as the famous Jacopo Bellini, who had contracted to produce several narratives for the *sala* including the 'Passion of Christ on the cross, rich with figures and other things that would be fitting' for which he received a handsome 375 gold ducats.⁵⁴ As Andrea da Murano was named second in the commissioning document for the Abraham narratives, it is possible he was engaged on them as Bartolomeo's collaborator. Like Bartolomeo, Andrea was a resident of the parish of Santa Maria Formosa and, as his works show a very close affinity with those of Bartolomeo, it has been reasonably suggested that Andrea had trained and worked in Bartolomeo's studio.⁵⁵ However, it seems more likely that Andrea trained in the 1450s under the auspices of both Vivarini brothers, who were then presumably still sharing a studio, for by the early 1460s when Bartolomeo started to work independently, Andrea was hired for a job working in his own right. By 1472 Andrea had his own studio together with his brother Girolamo, a woodcarver; any business collaboration between Andrea and Bartolomeo must have been dissolved definitively by 1485 when Andrea relocated to Castelfranco, where he was granted citizenship in 1499.⁵⁶ In 1470 Lazzaro Bastiani, another artist whose name is linked to the Vivarini, successfully applied to produce a narrative for the cycle at the Scuola Grande di San Marco.⁵⁷ Unfortunately the cycle was destroyed in the 1485 conflagration of the *albergo*. The loss of the one recorded large-scale narrative by Bartolomeo leaves a significant *lacuna* in the oeuvre.

The importance of the undertaking at the Scuola Grande di San Marco is reflected in a lack of other significant works associated with Bartolomeo in the period 1468 - c.1471. We can be sure Bartolomeo made an effort to produce a superb piece, for it would advertise his skills to a large number of potential customers. The finished narratives

⁵² 'S. Andrea da muran pentor'. ASV, S Grande di San Marco, b. 4, 6v.

⁵³ 'S Zuane belin depentor...' ASV, S Grande di San Marco, b. 4, 161r; *ibid.* 'S Zentil de f[u] Jac[op]o belim...' 159r.

⁵⁴ On the Jacopo Bellini commissions see P. F. Brown (1988), p. 47 and p. 269; the description of the Passion scene is as translated in Brown.

⁵⁵ P. Paoletti (1929), p. 84; Sponza in Lucco (1996), p. 226.

⁵⁶ Biographical notes of Andrea da Murano are to be found in P. Paoletti (1929), pp. 82-86, and A. De Nicolò Salmazo in Lucco (1990), pp. 729-30.

⁵⁷ P. F. Brown (1988), p. 48 and p. 269.

must have impressed, for shortly after completion Bartolomeo secured two important private contracts from patrician members of the confraternity who ordered altarpieces for private chapels in the city's most prestigious mendicant churches: the 1473 *St Augustine Polyptych* (fig. 2.01; was made for the prominently positioned altar of the Dolfin family at the Dominican church of SS Giovanni e Paolo, and the 1474 *St Mark Triptych* for the Corner chapel at the Franciscan conventual church of S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (fig. 3.01; Frari), discussed here in chapters 2 and 3. In 1473 artist Leonardo Boldrin witnessed the will of Piero Corner who, it will be argued, commissioned the *St Mark Triptych*.⁵⁸ Boldrin has also been linked to the Vivarini, and it is possible he assisted Bartolomeo on work on the Corner chapel which includes a Mantegnesque fresco, as well as the *St Mark Triptych*. Like the Vivarini, Boldrin may have had ties with Murano, but lived in central Venice.⁵⁹ The paucity of surviving independent works by Boldrin may indicate he was employed within a workshop; although documentary evidence shows Boldrin was certainly acquainted with Antonio Vivarini, his work is stylistically closer to Bartolomeo's.⁶⁰

In 1474 Bartolomeo undertook the *Madonna della Misericordia Triptych* (fig. 4.01; 1475, S. Maria Formosa) for a prestigious clerical confraternity, discussed in chapter 4 below. Again, he may have exploited personal association to secure the contract, for the Congregazione del Clero which commissioned it was based at his own parish church of S. Maria Formosa. By now, Bartolomeo was so successful that he had evidently taken on numerous contracts for the home and export markets and must have required significant workshop assistance. Until the mid-1470s, it seems his nephew Alvise, son of Antonio, was apprenticed to him. Although Alvise's later work would also show the influence of the pre-eminent Giovanni Bellini, his first signed altarpiece, the *Montefiorentino Polyptych* (fig. 1.11; 1476, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino) exhibits a very close rapport with Bartolomeo's altarpieces.⁶¹ Alvise would probably have been working in his uncle's workshop from the mid-1460s, and his successful

⁵⁸ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 479 114v-116r; also *ibid.*, b. 482, no. 768; The latter is incorrectly cited as b.481 in Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 445, n. 114, who do not draw any connection between this document, the Corner chapel and Bartolomeo Vivarini.

⁵⁹ Documents show members of the Boldrin family were resident on Murano in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Leonardo Boldrin himself was recorded living in the central Venetian parish of San Luca. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 445.

⁶⁰ For Boldrin, see: Berenson (1957), I, p. 41 and plates 406-8; Zampetti (1969), I, pp. 33-34; A. Ottolini in Lucco (1990), II, p. 738.

⁶¹ J. Steer (1982), pp. 5-7; Zampetti (1969), I, pp. 106-7. The inscription on the Montefiorentino altarpiece: '1476 LUDOVICUS VIVARINUS MURANIENSIS P.' Humfrey (1993), p. 346, cat. 22.

assimilation of his uncle's style helps explain the integrity and consistent quality of Bartolomeo's work up to the middle of the 1470s.⁶²

After Alvise's departure, Bartolomeo apparently had difficulty in retaining or attracting able assistants, evidenced by the poor, clumsy drawing of the figures in the *Conversano Polyptych* (fig. 4.04; Accademia, Venice) which was signed and dated 1475, the presumed year of Alvise's independence; from its inscription this altarpiece was evidently made in Venice for export to a town near Bari.⁶³ Since the 1450s the Vivarini had enjoyed a thriving export market in south-east Italy, where trading links with Venice were strong.⁶⁴ Apparently mindful of his reputation, but also overwhelmed with orders, it seems Bartolomeo delegated this altarpiece to a second-rate hand perhaps because it was destined for a remote location. Coeval works for more local and prestigious commissioners were handled with greater care. The so-called *Lussingrande Altarpiece*, also of 1475 (fig. 0.14), was produced for the Carthusian monks of the charterhouse near Padua. This highly decorative *sacra conversazione* clearly pleased its commissioners who arranged for delivery of a further altarpiece the following decade, the *Dormition of the Virgin* (fig. 8.01; 1484, Metropolitan Museum, New York).⁶⁵ That Bartolomeo was called upon to produce several important altarpieces destined for charterhouses, suggests that he benefited from recommendations passed within the Carthusian community.

In 1476 he made the *Bari Altarpiece* (fig. 0.15; S. Nicola, Bari) for Alvise Cauco, a Venetian expatriate, Canon of the church of S. Nicola in Bari.⁶⁶ Although the prevailing taste in southern Italy was for complex polyptychs, Cauco ordered an altarpiece which reflected the latest formal developments in his home city, and Bartolomeo produced a superb single-field *sacra conversazione*.⁶⁷ The austere classical setting of the Virgin and saints of the 1476 altarpiece, complemented by a severe classical frame, is in contrast to the exuberant Paduan detailing of the single-field

⁶² On Alvise's artistic formation, J. Steer (1982), pp. 3 ff.

⁶³ HOC OPUS SUMPTIBUS DOMNI ANTHONII DE CHARITATE CA/NONICI ECCLESIE DE CONVERSANO IN FORMAM REDACTUM -EST-1475; OPUS FACTUM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEUM VIVARINUM. Cited Nepi Sciré and Valcanover (1985), p. 185, no. 321.

⁶⁴ Griffiths (1976), pp. 23-27, noted the Vivarini domination of the market in South-East Italy.

⁶⁵ P. Sambin (1964), pp. 25 ff. and doc. 14.

⁶⁶ The altarpiece is inscribed: FACTUM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEUM / VIVARINUM DE MURIANO PINXIT. 1476. An inscription from 1737 on the frame base gives the commissioner's name: DNS LVDOVICVS CAVCHO DE VENETIIS HOC OPVS FIERI FECIT / RESTAVRATUM A DEV: CAN: D. JOSEPH DOTTVLA .A.D.1737. Humfrey (1993), p. 346, cat. 21.

⁶⁷ Humfrey (1986b), p. 76.

pala Bartolomeo had despatched to the same city over a decade earlier, the so-called *Naples* altarpiece. Cauco's significance as a donor is recorded in a document of 1470 which notes 'the Magnificent gentleman Lodovico Cauco of Venice' had endowed the 'large gold *ancona* which is on the high altar of the Modugno [cathedral] church' for which he was rewarded with an annual mass.⁶⁸ That altarpiece has been identified with another work by Bartolomeo, provenanced to Modugno cathedral, of which only the central panel survives – the *Annunciation* (fig. 4.13; Museo Provinciale, Bari), inscribed OPVS . FACTVM . VENETIIS . PER . BARTHOLO . MEVM . VIVA . RINVM . DE . MVRIANO . 1472. Salmi observed that the cathedral was dedicated to the Annunciation and that tradition had it Bartolomeo's *Annunciation* graced the high altar.⁶⁹ But as the *Annunciation* postdates the document by two years, and its surviving centre panel seems too modestly proportioned (106 x 68 cm) to have been designed for a cathedral high altar, Salmi's hypothesis can be discounted.⁷⁰ It seems more likely that the *Annunciation* was installed in a private chapel in the cathedral, where the inscription caught Cauco's attention and led him to Bartolomeo for the S. Nicola commission.

For the home market Bartolomeo made the *St Ambrose Polyptych* (fig. 5.01; Accademia, Venice) in 1477 for the wealthy and numerous stonemasons' confraternity, and in 1478 the *Bragora Altarpiece* (fig. 5.17; S. Giovanni in Bragora, Venice) which are discussed in chapter 5 here. In this period it seems Bartolomeo also made his second altarpiece (lost) for the church of SS Giovanni Paolo, this time for the burial chapel of Alvise Storlato (d. 1458).⁷¹ Storlato had been appointed to the distinguished position of Procurator of St Mark's in 1450, and is said to have been the last of his

⁶⁸ 'Die vicesimo tertio eiusdem Junii MCCCC^o LXX prefatum capitulum debet officiari semel in anno magnificum virum loisium cacum de Venetiis super conam magnam aureatam que est super altare maioris ecclesie medunii cum chiviale de serico albo et cum uno chiviale nigro sollepniter'. From a register of masses cited by Salmi (1919), p. 167, n. 5.

⁶⁹ Salmi (1919), pp. 166-67.

⁷⁰ Griffiths (1976), p. 25, assumed the document must relate to Bartolomeo's polyptych because of the coincidence in the commissioner's identity, however, the document clearly refers to a work already upon the altar in 1470: 'que est super altare maioris...'. On the Modugno altarpiece see also Pallucchini (1962), pp. 120-21, cat. 161 and D'Elia (1964), pp. 61-62, cat. 62.

⁷¹ 'Alvise' is the local form of 'Lodovico' or 'Luigi' (Louis) and the surname 'Storlato' was sometimes varied as 'Storlato'.

Moretti (1996), p. 80, noted that since the eighteenth century, scholars have mistakenly believed Vasari intended the *St Augustine Polyptych* in the same church when he described the altarpiece (see below). J. Steer (1982), p. 170, cat. 46, overlooked Vasari's description of the work, but relied on Sansovino's mention of the *St Louis Altarpiece*. Because Sansovino (1998), p. 65, called the artist 'Luigi' Vivarini, Steer included it in his catalogue of the lost works of Alvise. However, Vasari's identification of the artist as Bartolomeo may be considered more reliable than Sansovino's identification, for Sansovino, *ibid.*, also identified the author of Bartolomeo's *St Augustine Polyptych* as 'Luigi Vivarini': '...si vede la Palla di S. Agostino fatta à guazzo da Luigi Vivarino...'.

family line.⁷² His legacy provided for a magnificently-proportioned chapel which was built as an extension from the third bay on the right of the nave. The chapel was dedicated to St Louis of Toulouse (a very popular figure in Venice, where he was known as ‘Sant’ Alvisè’) as namesake of the deceased Procurator, who took the honourable position in the altarpiece. By dint of the prestigious commission and location, we can be sure that Bartolomeo lent his personal attention to the altarpiece, and it must have been amongst his most impressive and fine works, for Vasari singled it out for praise:

Bartolomeo Vivarino da Murano also did very well in the works which he made as one can see, as with many other [examples], in the panel [painting] on the altar of St Louis [of Toulouse] in the church of S. Giovanni e Paolo, in which he painted the aforesaid St Louis enthroned and robed in a cope, [with on one side] St Gregory, St Sebastian and St Dominic, and on the other side Saints Nicolas, Jerome and Roch, and above, further half-figures of saints.⁷³

Despite the order in which Vasari listed the saints, it is likely Roch and Sebastian were paired by their placement in equivalent positions either side of the enthroned St Louis, for Bartolomeo was attentive to iconographic as well as formal symmetry.

Francesco Sansovino also noted the *St Louis Altarpiece*: ‘And in the Chapel of St Louis erected by Andrea Stornado (*sic*) then Councillor, and later Procurator of St Mark, who died in 1478 (*sic*), there [is a work] painted by the aforesaid Vivarino’.⁷⁴ Sansovino’s misapprehension of Storlato’s date of death may be due to his confusion of that with a possible date inscribed on the altarpiece. The inclusion of St Roch in the programme indicates the altarpiece did not predate 1478 (the year contemporary sources state the cult of Roch took hold in Venice), whereas a dating to 1478, the year of the great ‘plague of Venice’, would explain the inclusion of both Saints Sebastian and Roch (see chapter 6). That almost two decades had passed between the death of Procurator Storlato and the completion of his funerary chapel was not particularly remarkable.

⁷² See Martinioni in Sansovino (1998) ‘Cronico Veneto’, p. 48, for (Luigi) Storlato’s date of accession. Soràvia (1822), I, p. 31, n. 1, citing a manuscript entitled *Origine di Venezia e delle Famiglie Patrizie*, noted ‘il Procuratore de Ultra Lodovico Storlato fu l’ultimo di quella patrizia famiglia’.

⁷³ ‘Bartolomeo Vivarino da Murano si portò anch’egali molto bene nell’opere che fece, come si può vedere, oltre a molte altre, nella tavola che fece all’altare di S. Luigi, nella chiesa di S. Giovanni e Polo, nella quale dipinse il detto S. Luigi a sedere col piviale indosso, S. Gregorio, S. Bastiano e S. Domenico, e dall’altro lato S. Niccolò, S. Girolamo e S. Rocco, e sopra questi altri Santi infino a mezzo’. G. Vasari, ‘Vita di Vittore Scarpaccia’ in 1567 edition of *Le Vite...* (2001), p. 542

⁷⁴ ‘: & nella Cappella di San Luigi fatta da Andrea Stornado Consigliero allora, & poi Procurator di S. Marco, il qual morì l’anno 1478. vi dipinse il predetto Vivarino’. Sansovino (1998), p. 65.

As a complex polyptych featuring an enthroned male ecclesiast flanked by other male saints, the *St Louis Altarpiece* was formally similar to the *St Augustine Polyptych* of 1473 in the same church. The *St Augustine Polyptych* possibly commended Bartolomeo to the commissioners of the Storlato chapel (presumably the executors of Storlato's will), who may well have referred to the earlier altarpiece in their contract with the artist. But Vasari's description suggests the *St Louis Altarpiece* was a wide, double-tiered polyptych, by contrast with the tall, triple-tiered *St Augustine Polyptych*. The horizontal bias of the *St Louis Altarpiece* would have befitted the generously-proportioned side chapel where it was housed, for the chapel is wide, but with a vault lower than that of the nave. An objective of the present study is to show, where possible, how Bartolomeo attentively composed his altarpieces made for the home market to the spatial and lighting conditions where they would be installed. Unfortunately, the interior of the gothic St Louis of Toulouse chapel was completely transformed in the first half of the seventeenth-century after its concession to a confraternity, which also prompted the dispersal or destruction of the polyptych (hence its omission from Ridolfi's 1648 *Vite*). When a new altarpiece was installed in the mid-seventeenth century, the earlier dedication of the chapel was commemorated in the replacement altarpiece which showed Louis of Toulouse together with the Magdalene at the foot of the Cross.⁷⁵

In the aftermath of the great plague of 1478, Bartolomeo was called upon to produce other images of St Roch. The *San Vidal Triptych*, of which the commissioner remains unknown, included St Roch, with Saints Lawrence and Nicholas, although the St Roch panel is lost and the figure of St Lawrence was decapitated in a botched restoration (fig. 6.10; surviving panels, S. Stefano, Venice). In 1480 Bartolomeo made the *St Roch Altarpiece* (fig. 6.01; S. Eufemia, Venice) for the eponymous *scuola piccola* based on the Giudecca, the subject of chapter 6 here.

After the production of the sumptuous *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01; 1482, Bernardo Chapel, Frari), which is discussed in chapter 7, Bartolomeo made major changes to his working practices and turned his attention almost exclusively to the export market; this final decade of Bartolomeo's life and work, and its repercussions on the historiography, will therefore be discussed in the concluding chapter.

⁷⁵ Manno and Sponza (1995), p. 45, and L. Moretti (1996), p. 80.

Small Madonna Panels

Small panels of the Madonna comprise the second main component of Bartolomeo Vivarini's extant oeuvre, of which a number of fine examples survive (a conservative listing may be found at appendix 3). Regrettably space does not permit detailed discussion of these here, although a full-length study is overdue and it is appropriate to make a few comments on the place of the small Madonnas in Bartolomeo's oeuvre and his business practices. This type of Madonna panel should be distinguished as a genre from depictions of the Virgin and Child which were made as polyptych components, such as the Correr Museum's *Virgin and Child* (fig. 2.08; inv. cl. I, 1475) cut down from a polyptych panel (see chapter 2).

Small devotional Madonnas were ubiquitous in the Venetian domestic environment, as demonstrated by inventories which almost invariably listed an image of 'Our Lady' amongst the household chattels.⁷⁶ They were objects of private devotion, to which their owners must have attached great sentimental significance, for they were often to be found in the bedroom (fig. 0.16) where they 'could be called upon to provide fecundity for the married couple, assistance to the parturient woman, and consolation to the dying'.⁷⁷ The panels often took the form of a Byzantine icon – indeed, the inventory of the chattels of Bartolomeo's commissioner Procurator Domenico Diedo included just one painting, a 'Greek-style *ancona*' (chapter 1). Although the local painters guild had succeeded in banning the sale of foreign *ancone* in 1436 (from the context we may understand as mainly referring to small devotional pictures), because of their 'poor [quality] gold and a lack of varnish', imports from the colony of Crete were permitted.⁷⁸ These icons were imbued with a sacred aura due to their association with the *Theotokos Nikopeia* at St Mark's basilica (fig. 0.17), originally looted from Constantinople, which the Venetians believed to have been painted by St Luke. Icons were imported in great quantities - Andreas Ritzos' *Virgin of the Passion* is a particularly fine example of a Cretan icon made for the Italian market (fig. 0.18; second half of the fifteenth century,

⁷⁶ For household inventories, Palumbo Fossati (1984), pp. 151-52.

⁷⁷ D. Romano (1993), p. 720.

⁷⁸ Favaro (1975), p. 25 and pp. 74-77, describes protectionist government policy regarding the import and export of luxury goods including paintings and painted objects. Guild rules prohibiting working on Sundays and other feast-days could be over-ridden in the case of completing works for export. In chapter xxxi of the painters' guild *mariegola*, cited *ibid.*, p. 75, foreign panels are described: 'de cativo oro e non son invernigade'. J. Shaw (n.d.), pp. 2-3, also discusses protective legislation.

Accademia, Florence).⁷⁹ They were also produced locally by immigrant painters, known as *madonnieri*.

Bartolomeo must have been working at the luxury end of the market, producing high quality items painstakingly-crafted, distinguished in form and quality from cheaper, and allegedly inferior, imports. For a painter such as Bartolomeo, with studio assistants to pay and a family to raise, the relatively rapid turnover of these small pictures (attested by the survival of around sixteen examples), must have represented an important source of steady income. As they were not necessarily made to order, the small Madonnas afforded efficient use of studio time – they could be taken up in slacker periods between big commissions, or set aside if there was more pressing work. The format of Bartolomeo's half-length Madonnas, like those of other *quattrocento* Venetian artists, was inevitably owed in part to the Byzantine icons. Half-length Madonnas by Jacopo Bellini, such as the *Madonna and Child with Cherubs* (fig. 0.19; c. 1455, cat. 582, Accademia, Venice) were quite evidently informed by them, and, although his versions were far more naturalistic, Giovanni Bellini sometimes alluded to the icon type in his own half-length depictions of the Virgin and Child; for example, the *Madonna and Child* (fig. 0.21; c. 1480, cat. 594, Accademia, Venice) marries a new renaissance naturalism with the more stylised icon tradition – here the child's pose is rigid, hieratic and his head disproportionately small.⁸⁰ On the other hand, it seems the Vivarini shop was generally less influenced by the Byzantine model – Antonio's Madonnas clearly owed more to International Gothic and less to the Greek tradition than Jacopo Bellini's, as with the example at the Venice Accademia (fig. 0.20; c. 1440, cat. 1236). In his turn, Bartolomeo seems to have been intent on distinguishing his Madonnas from the Byzantine panels. Only in his early Westminster Abbey version (fig. 0.22; Pallucchini cat. 134) did Bartolomeo depict the infant with adult-like proportions; in later versions the anatomy and physiognomy are naturalistically childlike, and the infant is depicted with a proportionately large head, chubby cheeks, button nose, and plump limbs, as in the version at the National Gallery in Washington (fig. 0.24; c. 1478). Sometimes Bartolomeo painted the child making the sign of benediction, but in other examples the gestures are charmingly infantile, such as in the versions in Sassari (1473, Museo Sanna, Sassari; Pallucchini cat. 159) and Harvard (fig. 0.25; Fogg Museum of Art,

⁷⁹ Hollingsworth (1994), pp. 142–44. Goffen (1990), chapter 1, discusses the sacred significance of Byzantine half-length Madonnas. Hills (1999), p. 143, observed Ritzos' *Virgin of the Passion* was almost certain made for the Italian market, as indicated by its inscriptions which are in Latin rather than Greek.

⁸⁰ Goffen (1990), chapter 1, considers Giovanni Bellini's adoption of certain characteristics and motifs from Byzantine icons.

Cambridge, Massachusetts; Pallucchini cat. 160) where Bartolomeo, observant of infantile behaviour, depicted the child sucking his fingers.

Bartolomeo's small Madonna panels are varied in detail, if formulaic in format. They are fairly consistent in size, between 52.5 and 95.3 centimetres in height, with most in the 50 to 60 centimetres range, and between 40 and 63.5 centimetres wide. In the Venetian fashion, the Virgin is invariably positioned behind a ledge, upon which the Christ child may be posed, perhaps seated or reclining upon a cushion. The background may be plain gold, or comprise a cloth of honour, or a glimpse of landscape seen beyond the cloth, or through windows – a play upon the 'window' form of the picture frame. The formula could be varied by a slight alteration in the poses of the figures, the substitution of a landscape background for a cloth of honour. In works up to about 1480, the child is usually clothed in the traditional fashion, after that date he is often naked; in this Bartolomeo seems to have followed Giovanni Bellini, who from the mid-1470s most often depicted the child unclothed, his nakedness witness to his humanity.⁸¹

An early example of the type, the *Virgin and Child with Saints Paul and Jerome* (fig. 0.23; inscribed OPVS . BARTOLOMEI . VIVARINI . DEMVRANO, National Gallery, London) shows a particular affinity with Paduan models; the delicacy of the Virgin's semi-transparent veil, arranged in crisp, clinging folds over her hair, her long, pale face, are quite different from the more monumentally robust Virgins Bartolomeo painted in later years. That these panels could be made without a particular customer in mind is illustrated by this work – for the purchaser apparently requested modifications to this pre-made panel which resulted in the uncomfortably tight composition, with the artist presumably instructed to squeeze Saints Paul and Jerome into the background of what is otherwise a typical composition of the type.⁸²

The *Virgin and Child* published by Pallucchini in 1988 (fig. 0.26; private collection, Great Britain) retains its original frame, and so shows how these pictures were conceived as *trompe l'oeil* windows, with a fictive ledge continuous with the wood of the picture frame, so that objects set upon the ledge – a cushion, the edge of the Virgin's mantle, the child – appear to enter the viewer's material world. The fictive windows

⁸¹ Goffen (1990), p. 30 and p. 43, noted the significance of nudity in Giovanni Bellini's half-length Madonnas, and observed that from the mid-1470s Bellini usually depicted the child naked.

⁸² As suggested in Dunkerton et al. (1991), pp. 69-70, where it is also argued the Botticelli *tondo*, *Virgin and Child with Saints John and an Angel* (c. 1490, National Gallery), was similarly altered on the instructions of a purchaser (a pair of angels replaced the Baptist).

created by these works are the domestic equivalent of the fictive paradisiacal chapels formed by works such as Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe Altarpiece* (c. 1480, Accademia, Venice) where, as Shearman observed, 'the idea of the spatial continuum was never clearer ... [affording] the psychological accessibility of the figure group and...the accessibility of the spectator to them'.⁸³ However, Bartolomeo never really experimented with the fictive-chapel format in his altarpieces, being more interested in creating the illusion of plasticity rather than space – indeed, his Madonna panels demonstrate this interest, and recall the Madonnas of wayside *capitelli* (tabernacles) sculpted in marble or Istrian stone, as well as Donatello's bronze reliefs, with which Bartolomeo was no doubt very familiar. In the case of the above-mentioned *Virgin and Child*, the three-dimensionality of the original frame enhances the paradoxical naturalism of the figures. The naturalism of the modelling is matched by his expression of human tenderness, sensitively described through touch and gesture and the naturalistic proportions of the infant. The figures' verisimilitude, together with the implied spatial continuity between the physical world and that beyond the picture plane must have allowed the fifteenth-century viewer to feel the Virgin's close presence and comprehend on an emotional level her role as mediatrix between the terrestrial and heavenly realms.

It is paradoxical that, given the dubious quality of some of the later export altarpieces, most of the secure small Madonna panels are of exceptionally high quality (discounting unsafe attributions, see below). Bartolomeo's shrewd attention to the quality of these small pictures is perhaps explained by their potential in attracting future custom for more important works through advertisement of the Vivarini name. The relative portability of these objects meant that they could be purchased by a foreigner passing through, or a homeward-bound expatriate. One such example may have been the 1486 *Virgin and Child* (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo), probably of Bergamask provenance and signed in the fashion used for the export market: '...Factum. Venetiis...';⁸⁴ such a high quality piece could well have served to whet the appetites of potential Bergamask clients. In any case, as Bartolomeo carefully quality-controlled altarpieces destined for

⁸³ Shearman (1992), pp. 97-98.

⁸⁴ Pallucchini (1962), p. 129, cat. 209; Rossi (1994), p. 129, cat. 10, and *idem.* (1988), p. 319, cat. 732. Whilst Bartolomeo's authorship is undoubted, it has been suggested the inscription was tampered with or falsified. Recent technical examination proved inconclusive. The picture was donated to the Accademia Carrara as part of the legacy of Count Guglielmo Lochis, whose collection comprised items mainly purchased in the vicinity of Bergamo and Milan.

local venues, it would have been counter-productive to fill his *bottega* with a display of third-rate objects which could have deterred potential altarpiece clients.

The Conditions of Artistic Patronage and Practice in Early Renaissance Venice

In early-renaissance Venice most artists worked as masters or employees in a *bottega*, which operated as a small, independent enterprise. Like other tradesmen, the painter was supervised by his guild (*mestiere* or *arte*) which, under the auspices of the State, set standards, protected the internal market and defined boundaries between trades. The word ‘bottega’, then as now, implied both ‘workshop’ and ‘retail outlet’, and guild rules stipulated that ready-made works be sold directly to the final purchaser through the *bottega*, and prohibited the sale of painted objects through other types of outlet or marketplace setting;⁸⁵ from 1479 the employment of third-party agents to sell painters’ works was also prohibited unless the agent was himself also a member of the painters’ guild.⁸⁶ Artists’ working lives thus entailed sales, and where necessary, promotion and pot-boiling productions; commercial aspects of Bartolomeo’s artistic production will be considered throughout this study. Guild statutes also indicate that in the context of *quattrocento* Venice, the distinction between ‘artisan’ and ‘artist’ is anachronistic, for Venetian ‘figure-painters’ (*figureri*) still belonged to the same guild as decorators of furniture and other objects, and indeed the painters of altarpieces could equally engage themselves in, or delegate to juniors, such work. Desire for higher status on the part of the *figureri* is documented only from the sixteenth-century, concomitant with social changes which saw, for example, increasing ostentation on the part of private individuals seeking to enhance their public status.⁸⁷ Analogously, important architects and sculptors working in Venice participated in the same guild as stonecutters, retaining a ‘medieval anonymity’ throughout the fifteenth century, in contrast to their famous Tuscan colleagues.⁸⁸

Despite the survival of just two principal genres in Bartolomeo’s oeuvre – altarpieces and the small Madonna panels, all painted in the tempera medium on a panel support –

⁸⁵ Chapters xxxiii, xxxviii and lxxvii of the guild *mariegola*, cited Favaro (1975), p. 73 (master *terrieri* were however permitted to sell painted works, and prints on canvas or card outside their *botteghe* on Wednesdays at San Polo, and Saturdays at San Marco.)

⁸⁶ Guild *mariegola* chapter xlv, cited Favaro (1975), p. 70.

⁸⁷ For the changing status of artists and the promotion of painting as a liberal art in sixteenth-century Venice, D. Rosand (1997), pp. 5-10 ff. and Huse in Huse and Wolters (1993), pp. 177-181.

⁸⁸ Howard (2002), p. 133. The masons’ guild is discussed in chapter 5 here.

there is evidence that his *bottega* produced a much wider range of work in more varied media. It was argued above that Bartolomeo was trained in fresco and painted the roundels in the destroyed Ovetari vault, and it will be proposed in chapter 3 that he was perhaps responsible for fresco decoration in the Corner chapel at the Frari. In chapter 5, Bartolomeo's scrutiny of objects made in relief will be discussed, and it will be suggested that he could have experimented with media such as terracotta. And it is known from the record of the Abraham narratives ordered by the Scuola Grande di San Marco that on at least one occasion he painted a major narrative on canvas; evidence of minor work on canvas is provided by a payment made in 1464 to the artist (identified as Bartolomeo in chapter 1 here) for a painted *cortina* (cover or curtain) made for the altarpiece he had just completed – it seems reasonable to suppose artists' studios habitually made the protective covers for their altarpieces.

More generally, survivals do not reflect the wide assortment of decorated objects which issued from fifteenth-century *botteghe*, which is better appreciated from the guild statutes, often concerned with regulating the decoration and sale of objects such as *cortine*, *cofani* (chests) and *quari* (a type of mirror) or military items including leather helmets, than *ancone*.⁸⁹ Rare survivals by the most prominent fifteenth-century Venetian artists indicate that even painters of repute worked on such multifarious objects – five *restelli* (another type of mirror) panels with allegorical scenes are attributed to Bellini (c. 1490, Accademia, Venice), and Carpaccio painted his famous *Venetian Ladies on a Terrance* and *Hunting in the Lagoon* on panels made for a shutter or door to a piece of furniture (c. 1495, Museo Civico Correr, Venice and Getty Museum Los Angeles, California). Of course, artists could also be engaged to decorate churches and ecclesiastical objects – for instance, in the early 1460s Bartolomeo's associate Andrea da Murano and another painter were paid for the gilding of the new choir at S. Zaccaria and, at the end of the century, Leonardo Boldrin, another Vivarini associate, was hired to decorate of the wooden casket of St John the Almsgiver for the church of S. Giovanni in Bragora.⁹⁰

Whilst the market for artistic goods flourished thanks to the prosperity of Venice – seen as a sign of God's favour – as well as its political stability, types of artistic patronage were conditioned by the Venetian political form of an oligarchic republic presided over

⁸⁹ Favaro (1975), p. 27.

⁹⁰ For Andrea da Murano see P. Paoletti (1929), p. 82.

by the doge.⁹¹ Although the doge was habitually called ‘prince’ and was fêted in considerable pomp and splendour, he was not the counterpart of the autocratic rulers of city-states such as Mantua or Ferrara, but more a symbolic figurehead than autocratic ruler, hemmed in by ever-tightening constitutional restrictions – and, consonantly, it seems ducal commissions of painters by no means matched the importance of artistic patronage on the part of rulers of other Italian city-states.⁹² Because Venice effectively lacked a princely court, or a *de facto* ruling dynasty as with Medicean Florence, unless he relocated abroad, an ambitious artist would not enjoy the privileges of a court painter, such as Mantegna experienced at Mantua. The terms ‘patron’ and ‘patronage’, with the connotation of powerful individuals extending favour, protection and even property, are therefore arguably less appropriate than ‘commissioner’ in the Venetian context.⁹³

The Venetian State did, however, offer considerable opportunities to Venetian painters, awarding contracts to decorate the state rooms and offices of government buildings. The most important such commission of the period was the extensive re-decoration of the Great Council Hall of the Ducal Palace with large canvasses depicting patriotic histories (destroyed). The project was initiated in 1474 by Gentile Bellini, on invitation, who was later joined by his brother Giovanni, and, after petitioning in 1488, Alvise Vivarini gained a significant share of the work.⁹⁴ There is no evidence Bartolomeo participated in these decorations, although he and his workshop may have contributed to other official schemes. In 1771 Zanetti noted a ‘figure of *Justice* painted by Bartolomeo Vivarini’ in the Magistracy of the Monte Nuovissimo at Rialto.⁹⁵ Unfortunately it

⁹¹ For a summary of conditions of patronage in renaissance Venice, Fletcher (1983).

Hills (1999), p.18, citing fifteenth-century Venetian historian Sabellico, noted that ‘for the Venetian ruling class their communal wealth was a sign of God’s favour’.

⁹² Although it is difficult to gauge the importance of fifteenth-century ducal patronage of painters in the ducal palace precinct because conflagrations have erased the artefacts and records are patchy, Fletcher (1983), p. 17, states Venetian doges were of the relatively minor significance as artistic patrons. Known ducal commissions include small official portraits, or larger votive pictures, commissioned by the doge as an obligatory donation to the ducal palace, such as Giovanni Bellini’s *Votive Portrait of Agostino Barbarigo* (S. Pietro Martire, Murano). This work may have been the original made for the ducal palace, D. Romano (1993), p. 714, or a replica made for the doge’s private house, Goffen (1990), p. 99. Surviving pieces of this type indicate the Bellini shop gained the lion’s share of the ducal commissions of the period, perhaps reflecting Bellini’s status as official State painter. It is quite possible Bartolomeo also made ducal portraits, for the quality of his altarpiece commissions demonstrates that he was held in the highest regard by those of high rank, although the lack of independent portraits in his extant oeuvre (or in any reliable record) is notable.

⁹³ To distinguish the commissioner of a one-off item such as an altarpiece from the more involved artistic ‘patron’, Baxandall (1988), p. 1, preferred the term ‘client’, and Humfrey (1993), p. 87, ‘donor’.

⁹⁴ J. Steer (1982), pp. 44ff; pp. 175-76, cat. 49; and for a transcription of Alvise Vivarini’s petition *ibid.*, appendix III, p. 97.

⁹⁵ Zanetti (1972), p. 27.

seems this work was destroyed after public and ecclesiastical buildings were asset-stripped in the early-nineteenth century, for it is probably identifiable with the painting classified under 'trivial works, and worthless canvasses' as '...style of Vivarini / *Justice*, property of the ex-Magistracy of the Governors of Revenue: ruined, not to be restored'.⁹⁶ The *Justice* formed part of a larger scheme of Virtues (namely *Faith, Charity, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence*), saints and other religious subjects mainly by sixteenth-century artists; Bartolomeo's *Justice* was perhaps a relic of an earlier and equally extensive programme, which could have been gradually replaced during the sixteenth century.⁹⁷ Another record from the post-Napoleonic period lists a Bartolomeo Vivarini triptych (?) found at the former Venetian Senate, the *Madonna and Child, with Saints Jerome and Catherine*, which was despatched to Milan in 1811 with many other works of art.⁹⁸ The triptych was possibly an official state commission, or else could have been donated to the State by a patriotic individual.⁹⁹

It was probably symptomatic of the prevailing conditions of patronage that, on the evidence of survivals, Bartolomeo Vivarini's most important local clients fell into two categories – members of the patriciate on the one hand, and local confraternities on the other. Chapters 1–3 and 7 examine splendid altarpieces he made for patrician family chapels, several of which were the burial places of procurators of St Mark's (statesmen second in status only to the doge). Bartolomeo's patrician altarpieces reflect the characteristics and values of the ruling class which commissioned them; whilst overt self-promotion was curbed to an extent by a prevailing decorum governing display, rooted in both religious and republican values, the decorative elements of a family chapel nevertheless served to assert the lineage, patriotism and pious virtue of an individual or family.

⁹⁶ 'Quadri più triviali, e tele inutili...N° 1 / Maniera Vivarini / La Giustizia, appartiene al fu Magistrato de' Governatori dell'Entrate: rovinato, non si ristaura'. *Pro memoria* of paintings from public buildings held by Inspector Pietro Edwards, cited Zorzi (2001), Doc. B., p. 401

⁹⁷ 'Elenco de' Quadri esistenti ne' Locali appartenenti in addietro agli ex Magistrati detti de' Governatori dell'Entrate...' Cited Zorzi (2001), Doc. A, p. 400.

⁹⁸ '...1811. Venezia / Specifica delle pitture contenute in ciascuna della qui sottonotate Casse consegnate...in Milano. Cassa N[ume]ro 1/...Bartolomeo Vivarini / B[eat]a V[irgi]ne, San Girolamo e S[an]ta Catterina; prov[enien]za dal fu Veneto Senato'. Cited Zorzi (2001), Doc. E, p. 403.

The triptych is now lost, although a fine panel depicting *St Jerome* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna; formerly, Mario Baldi Collection, Ferrara), Pallucchini (1962), p. 118, cat. 146, might be identified with it.

⁹⁹ See Fletcher (1983), p. 20, on donations from private collectors to the State, and D. Romano's (1993) study of the significance of 'recycled paintings and other luxury objects'.

Since the end of the thirteenth century the patrician class, originally constituted of wealthy merchants, had been formally closed to newcomers with only rare exceptions.¹⁰⁰ Adult patrician males were the only enfranchised section of the populace, and the only people to whom political office was open – the patriciate thus literally embodied the State and, as a consequence of this, they identified closely with it. Their self-identification with the State is most clearly manifest in the (privately commissioned) ducal tombs, where iconographic programmes combine family devices with State symbolism, together with Virtues and holy figures. A similar, if more subtle, alliance of the iconographies of clan, State and religion may be perceived in other contemporary patrician monuments; for instance, the Marcian iconography of Bartolomeo Vivarini's *St Mark Altarpiece*, made for the gated chapel of the prominent and wealthy Corner family at the Frari, acts in concert with an inscription to the family patriarch's outstanding deeds of patriotism, to suggest the family's virtue and unity with the State. Similarly, the altarpieces Bartolomeo made for Procurator of St Mark's Domenico Diedo and the Bernardo family, bankers to the State, employed perhaps the most typical iconography of a Venetian patrician altarpiece - the Virgin and saints, 'for the Virgin...embodied not only [the Venetians'] religious piety but, as one of the principal images of Venice herself, also their patriotic loyalties'.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Venice was not only believed to be especially favoured of the Virgin, and supposedly founded in AD 421 on the feast of the Annunciation, but, as Rosand has discussed, the Virgin was one of the female figures synthesised into the personification of the State.¹⁰²

Over the course of the early renaissance, the Venetian ruling class became increasingly 'aristocratic' and exclusive: '...the patricians...scurried to get their genealogical houses in order and to tighten the lines of noble status...During these years exclusivity and hierarchy replaced older, freewheeling tendencies ...a more hierarchical, status-conscious ordering of Venetian society overwhelmed the more open associations of the trecento.'¹⁰³ These tendencies were distilled into a preoccupation with the patrician bloodline, which brought new bureaucratic controls to ensure 'purity' of lineage, and were rendered visually in the celebration of dynasty in the inscriptions on private palaces.¹⁰⁴ Analogously, the programmes of Bartolomeo's patrician altarpieces, where

¹⁰⁰ Pincus (2000), p. 149, cites examples of exceptional admittances to the patriciate in the fourteenth century.

¹⁰¹ Hollingsworth (1994), p. 141.

¹⁰² Rosand (1984).

¹⁰³ D. Romano (1987), p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ See Grubb (1994) on measures taken to ensure the purity of patrician lineages, and for inscriptions P.F. Brown (1996), p. 255.

these are 'read' together with other components of the respective funerary chapels, allude to the patriline – although, as it was expedient to present this discreetly, male namesake-saints 'represented' key figures in the male lineage without accompanying donor portraits, so that polyptychs composed entirely of saints could operate like hagiographic genealogies; as Humfrey has observed, it was '[an] aspect of the traditional Venetian suspicion of individual self-promotion, especially on the part of patricians who might aspire to excessive power, is the general lack of donor portraits appearing in altarpieces painted for churches in metropolitan Venice'.¹⁰⁵

The relative reticence of the Venetian patrician commissioners is indeed notable in comparison with their more assertive peers in *quattrocento* Florence where, for instance, Ghirlandaio's *Annunciation to Zacharias* (1490, fresco) in the Tornabuoni chapel at S. Maria Novella, presents '...twenty-one male portraits of the *consorteria* [lineage] and its notable associates, ...[in] an extended patron portrait whose inscriptions further attest to its mythologizing or idealised grandeur.'¹⁰⁶ Comparing artistic patrons in Venice and Florence, Hollingsworth remarked: '...it is striking how few [Venetian] private patrons stand out. In their palaces, chapels, tombs and altarpieces, patricians and *cittadini* alike showed a conspicuous lack of interest in self-glorification.'¹⁰⁷ It is perhaps ingenuous to suppose the Venetian patron had no 'interest' in self-promotion – rather, in fifteenth-century Venice, any personal impulse for extravagant display might be restrained by the traditional decorum of modesty in self-presentation, where, for instance, 'gentlemen [nobles]...are not distinguished from the citizens by their clothes, because they all dress much the same way...'.¹⁰⁸ As an individual should not stand out from the throng, so public edifices should not be overshadowed by private palaces. For example, in 1464 the Venetian moral philosopher Giovanni Caldiera advised that private houses of the wealthy should be built with 'zealous genius and the greatest and most excellent artistry', but extravagant display should be avoided:

Homes should not be built by citizens according to the abundance of the wealth, but for the sake of the dignity of the city...magnificence is fitting in the erection of churches, cities and fortresses. What is truly appropriate to the houses of citizens is utility and not splendour. Those

¹⁰⁵ Humfrey (1993), p. 106; on the condemnation of ostentation in private chapels, Cole (1995), p. 24, and P. F. Brown (1987), p. 189.

¹⁰⁶ Simons in Kent and Simons (1987), p. 237.

¹⁰⁷ Hollingsworth (1994), p. 136.

¹⁰⁸ Sanudo, writing in 1493, cited by P. F. Brown (1997), p. 143.

which are constructed with worked marbles and artful stones, likewise with gold, and painted with colours, seem to be utterly alien to both civility and the dignity of the citizens. And the householder should rather make himself worthy of admiration because of [his] virtue... than because of the sumptuous home by which he has desired to be conspicuous...¹⁰⁹

Elsewhere, Caldiera recommended that the citizen should act with the interests of the Republic as his top priority, and stated that a magnificent man should properly expend his wealth in the construction of churches and other projects which would ‘cast glory upon the city’.¹¹⁰ Caldiera’s views were echoed at the close of the century by the prominent political theorist Domenico Morosini, who similarly advised that a city should appear magnificent, and recommended churches and public buildings be honourably decorated – but wealthy citizens should restrain their appetite for grandeur when erecting private houses, so that public buildings were not outshone.¹¹¹ Of course, Caldiera and Morosini were essentially advocating an Aristotelian *mediocritas*, a golden mean between magnificence and shabbiness. But their comments should also be understood in the context of a city which enraptured astonished visitors with the luxury of its private buildings – somewhat anomalously to Venetian republican ideals:¹¹² in 1494 the French ambassador, Philippe de Commynes, described the Grand Canal as ‘the most beautiful street that exists...in the whole world, and with the finest houses’,¹¹³ and in the same year a Milanese priest, Fra Pietro Casola, confessed to being left speechless when he was shown a room in the house of a certain Ser Nicolò Benvegnudo in the district of San Polo:

I could only reply with a shrug of the shoulders, for it was estimated that the ornamentation of the room...had cost 2,000 ducats and more....there [was] so much gold everywhere that I do not

¹⁰⁹ Caldiera *De iconomia veneta*... (c. 1464), cited by M. King (1975), pp. 552-52. (In King’s translations, the term ‘citizen’ is used in the modern sense, and is not intended to refer only to members of the *cittadino* class, the middle estate in the Venetian social hierarchy.)

¹¹⁰ Caldiera *De Prestantia Venetae Politiae* and *De Virtutibus Moralibus et Theologicis* (c. 1464), paraphrased by M. King (1975) p. 558 and p. 547 respectively.

¹¹¹ Morosini *De Bene Instituta Re Politica* (1497), unfinished text first published by Finzi (1969). For Morosini’s recommendation of restraint, see Cozzi (1997), especially p. 146.

¹¹² Paraphrasing Pontano’s essay ‘On Splendour’, Gilbert (1998), p. 425, defines *mediocritas* as ‘...[presentation of] a proper Aristotelian mean, *mediocritas*, between the ostentatious and the *sordidus*’. However, as P. F. Brown (1996), p. 255, asserts ‘...a broadly accepted theory of magnificence similar to that which was developing in Florence would not emerge in Venice until the later sixteenth century’; the conflicting tendencies in renaissance Venice are discussed below.

Hills (1999), p. 74, describes the extraordinary richness of decoration and finish on domestic properties in the later fifteenth-century, and the astonishment expressed by visitors from abroad at the ‘unparalleled level of luxury’.

¹¹³ Commynes, cited by Wolters in Huse and Wolters (1993), p.8.

know whether in the time of Solomon ...in which silver was reputed more common than stones, there was such abundance as was displayed there.¹¹⁴

In the following century, Sansovino claimed in his *Venetia Città Nobilissima...* (1581) that 'out of modesty' private dwellings were invariably referred to as houses (*case*) – for only the Ducal Palace was worthy of the term *palazzo*. However, as Wolters has observed, by entitling the relevant chapter *Palazzi di Venezia*, Sansovino inadvertently revealed the 'persistent tension between an ideology...and the reality of building as a means of self-aggrandisement'.¹¹⁵

Although the traditional republican ethos of modesty in self-presentation had been long undergoing this process of compromise, or conflict, with personal ambitions for greater magnificence, particularly in the cases of dwellings and female attire, the ideal may have endured longer in respect of the embellishment of churches due to the influence of religious reformers who railed against the use of ecclesiastical space for self-glorification. According to Branca, Venetian humanism had exhibited a puritan strain since the firebrand Dominican preacher Giovanni Dominici had resided at SS Giovanni e Paolo, the city's foremost Dominican convent, for over a decade at the close of the fourteenth century.¹¹⁶ Dominici held, for instance, that the rebuilding of churches was a virtuous act on the part of a wealthy person, but he cautioned that donations for this purpose should be made anonymously.¹¹⁷ As both SS Giovanni e Paolo and the Frari were undergoing ambitious rebuilding programmes, it is likely Dominici had cause to voice this opinion locally.

The Franciscan Observant preacher Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444), who was swiftly canonised in 1450, sojourned for several extended periods in Venice during the first half of the fifteenth century. Bernardine also cautioned forcefully against personal ostentation in churches, preaching that good works should be carried out most discreetly. He particularly rebuked: 'those who do their good works in building chapels, in having chalices and altar-cloths made – onto which they stick their personal devices', he denounced this imposition of family arms as the 'smoke of vainglory' and spiritually

¹¹⁴ Casola, cited P.F. Brown (1987), pp. 124-25. The magnificent chamber described by Casola was depicted in Mansueti's *Healing of the Daughter of Ser Bernvegnudo of San Polo* (c. 1502-06, Accademia, Venice), discussed by P.F. Brown (1988), pp. 153-56.

¹¹⁵ Wolters in Huse and Wolters (1993), p. 16.

¹¹⁶ Branca in J.R. Hale (1973), p. 230.

¹¹⁷ For these views of Dominici, see Fraser Jenkins (1970), p. 163.

worthless.¹¹⁸ As well as appealing to all sectors of the Venetian populace through his spirited open-air performances which were attended by vast crowds, Bernardine captivated influential members of the ruling class, and is said to have prompted the foundation of the Carthusian monastery, S. Andrea, as well as the hospital of the Lazaretto Vecchio. The Franciscan preacher also befriended the prominent and influential Giustiniani family, including the distinguished humanist Bernardo and his uncle, the first patriarch of Venice, the saintly and ascetic Lorenzo Giustiniani, who had an important influence on ecclesiastic and secular politics. The patriarch's views on personal display are exemplified by his threat of excommunication to those women who dressed in a luxurious manner and adorned themselves with jewels, and his own initial resistance to ecclesiastical office with its pomp and finery.¹¹⁹ (Of course, in Venice as in Republican Florence, sumptuary legislation had been ratified in order to curb excessive personal display, although these laws were widely flouted.¹²⁰) The extent of Bernardine's influence in Venice may be gauged by his promotion in 1470 to the status of a patron saint of Venice during the dogeship of Cristoforo Moro (d. 1471), a devotee of Bernardine.

That the desirable *mediocritas* in personal display advocated by the humanist philosophers often eluded the Venetian patriciate is attested by contemporary funerals which 'vacillated between two extremes' of indecorous magnificence and self-abnegation.¹²¹ Doge Moro's own funerary arrangements exemplify the conflicting tendencies: Moro effectively created a splendid renaissance mausoleum (begun 1470, Pietro Lombardo) from the chancel of the Franciscan Observant church of San Giobbe, (which had recently been co-dedicated to Bernardine), though he made 'a great show of humility' with regard to his interment, instructing that he should be buried in a simple floor-tomb and robed in a Franciscan habit with his feet bare.¹²² Although no effigy or portrait of Moro appears in the chapel, contrary to Bernardine's teaching his family crests flank the triumphal arch which forms the entrance to the domed chancel. A similar juxtaposition of worldly ostentation and pious modesty also characterises the Corner

¹¹⁸ 'Or voglio...dire che coloro che fanno loro limonisine, chi in fare capelle, chi in fare calici, e chi in fare paramenti, là dove pongono l'armi loro. E perché credi che ve le ponghino? non per altro se non perché si sappi che l'ha fatte. Che credi che dimostrino quelle armi? Non altro che per fummo...È il fine suo, così è l'operazione...E l'anima che credi che ne senta, eh? Poco mi credo io, però che questo non è altro che fummo di vanagloria.' Bernardino da Siena (1989), I, pp. 1204-5.

¹¹⁹ For Lorenzo Giustiniani, see for example, Tramontin (1989) also chapter 4 here. Giustiniani's opinions on female attire are cited in Molmenti (1973), I, p. 395.

¹²⁰ Molmenti (1973), I, pp. 392-95.

¹²¹ D. Romano. (1987), pp. 112-13

¹²² Humfrey (1993), p. 124; p. 327, n. 113.

family chapel, where the chapel founder, Ferigo Corner, was lavishly praised in an epitaph, but modestly buried in a communal floor-tomb, and where no donor portrait appears in Bartolomeo's *St Mark Triptych* made for the chapel. The epitaph attempts to reconcile contradictory republican and aristocratic values – it eulogises Corner for his great lineage and wealth, but emphasises that he used his prosperity piously for the public good, that he was well-known for his modesty and fairness, and was beloved by all the people. The Corner epitaph is consonant with Caldiera's circular justification of the privileged position of the patriciate – noblemen, he wrote, earned their position because of their merits not their birth (although he included merit accumulated by forefathers), and he praised the possibilities great personal wealth allowed for magnanimity, '[for]... the magnanimous man [acts] for the great good and health of the republic and for the honour of divine worship...and [he] promptly succours those whom he knows to be in need...' ¹²³

Whereas conspicuous private patronage in ecclesiastical settings remained problematic, display on the part of the city's corporations (*scuole*) was deemed patriotic and to the honour of the whole city. ¹²⁴ The *scuole*, of which there was a considerable number varying greatly in size, scope, and wealth, provided the enormous cast for spectacular processions which marked the 'magnificent and pompous celebration of the feasts' ¹²⁵ and caused foreign visitors to marvel – Commynes proclaimed Venice '...the most triumphant city that I have ever seen'. ¹²⁶ In the second half of the fifteenth century inter-*scuola* rivalry stimulated increased artistic commissioning on the part of the *scuole* for ambitious decorative schemes for their meeting halls, as well as 'honourable' altarpieces for confraternity chapels in local churches. ¹²⁷ It is therefore unsurprising that the *scuole* were the other major source of local commissions for Bartolomeo, who, as noted above, contributed to the important decorative scheme at the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Bartolomeo's confraternity altarpieces, discussed in chapters 4–6, reflect the very different nature of the respective sodalities for which they were made – a wealthy congregation of priests, a trade *scuola* and a devotional confraternity dedicated to St Roch, the latter established in response to a devastating plague. It will be shown how the altarpiece programmes reflected the particular membership profile, constitution

¹²³ Caldiera paraphrased and cited in M. King (1975), p. 564 and p. 548 respectively.

¹²⁴ P. F. Brown (1987), p. 189.

¹²⁵ Fabri cited in P.F. Brown (1988), p. 166.

¹²⁶ See Muir (1984), p. 60, and P.F. Brown (1988), pp. 166-67, for the impressions of foreigners; Commynes is cited in Brown.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Hollingsworth (1994), chapter 9; Howard (2002), pp. 110-15.

and purpose of the commissioning sodality, and range from the theologically engaged, to the nationalistic, and thaumaturgical.

Reception and Historiography

It will be argued Bartolomeo was a very accomplished, visually interesting and sometimes formally inventive artist, highly regarded in his day. But, whilst the bibliography may seem extensive, many publications are slight, repetitive, negative, and the absence of a full-length monograph is symptomatic of a continuing disregard for his work. This final section of the introductory chapter therefore comprises a brief appraisal of Bartolomeo's critical reception, highlighting the more influential of the older texts, and the historical vicissitudes informing Bartolomeo's modern reputation.

Sixteenth-century critics were uninterested in Bartolomeo's old-fashioned altarpieces and either overlooked them, or mentioned them briefly. As noted above, Vasari treated Bartolomeo succinctly (1568), characterising him competent and prolific. In *Venetia Città Nobilissima e Singolare...* (1581) Francesco Sansovino habitually confused the various Vivarini, despite the artists' prominent signatures.¹²⁸ Later writers further confused them, and the family acquired two mythical members, with the erroneous texts inhibiting the emergence of distinct Vivarini oeuvres.

In his 1648 *Le Meraviglie dell'Arte ouvero Le Vite de Gl'Illustri Pittori...* Ridolfi provided the first reasonably reliable list of Bartolomeo's local works, though the text is not comprehensive, chronology is inaccurate and some confusion of the Vivarini was compounded. But Ridolfi was first to enthuse over Bartolomeo's work, describing him as the best of the Vivarini, as noted above.¹²⁹ The Vivarini were excluded from Marco Boschini's idiosyncratic 1660 *Carta del Navigar Pittoresco*, and their works are noted flatly in his *Le Ricche Minere della Pittura Veneziana* (1674) which, like Sansovino's *Città Nobilissima*, lists paintings to be seen in Venetian churches and public buildings. Boschini often referred to 'il Vivarini da Murano' or similar, without distinguishing family members. His indifference to Bartolomeo may be explained by the artist's crisp,

¹²⁸ For example, Sansovino (1998), p. 188, attributed the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* to Antonio, and gave the two polyptychs at SS Giovanni e Paolo to 'Luigi' (Alvise), see above; his account of the paintings in San Giovanni in Bragora is very muddled, see chapter 5 here. Sansovino's text was probably informed by the lost section of Michiel's which described the churches and other monuments of Venice and their paintings. Robertson (1968), p. 43.

¹²⁹ Ridolfi (1999), I, p. 54.

graphic style antithetical to *venezianità*, the quintessential Venetian-ness of Venetian painting as Boschini helped construct it, characterised by soft forms, and a fluid, painterly style.¹³⁰ In the 'Breve Istruzione' introducing the second edition of *Ricche Minere* (1674) Boschini conceived 'la Pittura' according to the Vasarian cycle of growth, maturity and decadence. For Boschini the Venetian *cinquecento* was the apex of the cycle and he generally disregarded earlier artists, with the exception of Giovanni Bellini, styled progenitor of *venezianità*.¹³¹ Giorgione is described as Bellini's heir and it was the soft, painterly quality of Giorgione's work which Boschini highlighted for admiration, although his most extravagant praise is reserved for Titian and Veronese; on the other hand, 'Li Vivarini da Murano' and their contemporaries produced works so indistinguishable that the artists necessarily inscribed them with their names.¹³²

Giovanni Bellini's reputation remained pre-eminent, and he was credited with most Venetian renaissance developments. Critics used – and continue to use – Bartolomeo as a foil against which to highlight Bellini's genius, constructing Bartolomeo as Bellini's antithesis. As Bellini's oeuvre changed over time at its margins, so Bartolomeo's shifted as its negative, exemplified in the attribution of the *St Vincent Ferrer Polyptych* (SS Giovanni e Paolo); as Boschini defined Bellini's greatness by the nascent painterly quality of his style, he took the Mantegnesque, graphically drawn *St Vincent Ferrer Polyptych* from Bellini's oeuvre where Sansovino had placed it, and gave it to Bartolomeo.¹³³ Boschini's attribution held sway until the earlier twentieth century when Longhi (1914) returned the polyptych to Bellini.¹³⁴ Although most modern art historians concur with Longhi's attribution, the authorship and dating of this work remain controversial.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ See Sohm (1991) for Boschini and *venezianità*.

¹³¹ Berenson (1895), p. 26, observed that from the sixteenth century Giovanni Bellini was styled the sole precursor of the Venetian *cinquecento*: 'The truth is that Vasari's contemporaries ...felt as if they were already ages away from the fifteenth century, and consequently took little pleasure in artists of two or three generations ago, scarcely caring to burden memory with their names. Hence the habit...of making one great name stand for a whole art-epoch or style. When Vasari was preparing the second edition of his *Lives* ...Giovanni Bellini had already become a generic term for 'superior fifteenth-century Venetian Master...'

¹³² 'Vi furono poi Marco Basaiti, Benedetto Diana, Giovanni Buonconsiglio, Lazaro Silvestrini, Cristoforo Parmense, Vittore Belliniano, Girolamo santa Croce e li Vivarini da Murano. Tutti questi e altri furono in un ordine di tempo e seguirono l'un l'altro le stesse pedate, di modo che difficilmente si fa di essi la distinzione... Quello poi, che molte volte facilita la distinzione, è che usavano tutti quei Pittori in ogni sua opera...registrare il loro nome.' Boschini (1674), pp. 707-8.

¹³³ As observed by Robertson (1968), p. 43.

¹³⁴ See Robertson (1968), p. 46, for the reception of Longhi's thesis.

¹³⁵ Sponza in Goffen and Nepi Scirè (2000).

Equally misleading was the advocacy of early apologists for Bartolomeo Vivarini who credited him with improbable technical and formal advances. In *Della Pittura Veneziana...* (1771) Zanetti, generally an able connoisseur, conceded that the works retained a primitive quality, but promoted Bartolomeo as one of the first Venetians to use oils (he did not) and a leading exponent of the “Murano School”.¹³⁶ In *Storia Pittorica della Italia* Lanzi (1795) developed the theme suggested by Zanetti, fashioning Murano as the cradle of the Venetian renaissance.¹³⁷ This hyperbole must have led to the striking claims made by Neumann-Rizzi in *Elogio Accademico dei Vivarini Primi Padri della Veneziana Pittura*, apparently delivered as a speech to students of the Accademia di Belle Arti (1816). A veiled call for a Venetian resistance to Austrian rule, the text rhetorically revisits the old Florentine-Venetian rivalry; Venice is posited as the source of the Italian renaissance and the Vivarini its protagonists, and the Vivarini’s fame and merit is claimed to have exceeded Masaccio’s.¹³⁸

Almost a century later, modernising authors such as Crowe and Cavalcaselle (1871; English edition *A History of Painting in North Italy...* annotated by Borenius, 1912) and Testi (*La Storia della Pittura Veneziana*, 1915), informed by documents published by Paoletti and Ludwig, included monograph-style entries on Bartolomeo in their Venetian painting surveys. With the prevailing emphasis on correct attribution, Bartolomeo’s *oeuvre* became more accurately defined. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century the Vivarini became the subject of a controversy which informed their modern reception. In the first edition of his Lorenzo Lotto monograph (1895), Bernard Berenson audaciously postulated an ‘alternative’ school of Venetian renaissance painting, outside of the exclusive Bellini–Giorgione–Titian tradition, hypothesising Alvise Vivarini as the teacher of Cima, Lotto and others. Antonio and Bartolomeo, as presumed teachers of Alvise, were thus the progenitors of a newly-identified alternative tradition in Venetian renaissance painting. Sinigaglia’s *De Vivarini, Pittori da Murano* (1905) takes up from Berenson, with the popularising author asserting that the Vivarini assisted in the evolution of Venetian painting which culminated in the great sixteenth-century achievements, affirming that Lotto and others were pupils or followers of Alvise.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Zanetti (1972), pp. 23-31.

¹³⁷ Lanzi (1795), p. 40. It is symptomatic of the historical confusion that Lanzi, after earlier writers, mistakenly believed Quirizio da Murano (active 1461-78) and Andrea da Murano (active 1463-1504) to be the earliest exponents of ‘la scuola di Murano’, active around 1400.

¹³⁸ ‘Maso di S Giovanni...non agguagliò ne’ in valore, ne’ in fama i Vivarini’ I. Neumann-Rizzi [n.d. (1816)], p. 9 and p. 13

¹³⁹ Sinigaglia (1905), pp. 54-60.

Although Berenson retracted in 1913, Roberto Longhi attacked the hypothesis (1914; 1946). In his *Viatico per Cinque Secoli di Pittura Veneziana* (1946) Longhi promoted the monolithic reputation of Giovanni Bellini and denigrated the Vivarini. The slight *Viatico* was highly influential and Longhi's opinions on the development of Venetian painting (including Giovanni Bellini's supposed training of Lorenzo Lotto) prevailed, particularly in Italy. Some critics, including Longhi, extrapolated biographical scraps to inform their vocabularies and reinforce prejudices about Bartolomeo's characteristics as an artist. Alluding to his father's trade as a glass-maker and the Murano glass industry, his work was described as 'populist', 'artisanal' and 'vulgar' and the vitreous quality of the painted surface was emphasised. Whilst Longhi described Bellini as 'a creator of sublime genius', he styled Bartolomeo a 'competent artisan'.¹⁴⁰ The opposition – of 'vulgar' and 'noble' – reinforced the craftsman / genius distinction. In the earlier twentieth century 'vulgar' was used by several influential scholars to characterise Bartolomeo's figures and physiognomies, according to Testi, for instance, the 'figure of Christ [in the 1482 *Ca' Bernardo* altarpiece] is vulgar, but not without expression'.¹⁴¹ Such elitist distinctions may be traced back at least to Boschini who (without specific reference to Bartolomeo Vivarini) declared: 'Half-length figures painted from plebeian models are symptomatic of corrupt taste'.¹⁴² In a 1935 article Moschini reappraised Bartolomeo's work, asserting an inappropriate Italian paradigm had been employed in the past, and arguing the oeuvre should be understood in terms of Germanic painting and sculpture. But Moschini himself was inculcated in Italian / Florentine forms, and, describing at least some of Bartolomeo's figures as 'vulgar' revealed his own Florentine taste. Finally, Moschini reduced the Germanic elements in Bartolomeo's style to an indication of his backward, medieval mentality, and supposed the artist would have done well to have relocated to a provincial backwater.¹⁴³

The paucity of substantial modern research on Bartolomeo Vivarini is probably due to Longhi's prevailing influence, particularly on Italian scholarship. Much twentieth-century criticism follows Longhi in characterising Bartolomeo as conservative,

¹⁴⁰ Bellini is 'un genio creatore sublime' and Bartolomeo 'un buon artigiano'. Longhi (1952), p. 10.

¹⁴¹ Testi (1915), II, p. 478: '...il tipo del Cristo morto è volgare, ma non manca d'espressione'.

¹⁴² *La Carta del Navigar Pittoresco*, cited in Fletcher (1979), p. 421

¹⁴³ 'Si comprenderà dunque quanto spirito, per così dire, medioevale fosse ancora nel nostro Vivarini nonostante i suoi tentativi e le sue apparenze. Allora verrà fatto d'immaginare quanto sarebbe stato di vantaggio a quell'artista starsene lontano da Venezia e ancor più dalle nuove correnti che ivi s'andavano affermando, e vivere nel chiuso di qualche centro provinciale.' V. Moschini (1935), pp. 201-214 (citation p. 214.)

backward-looking and incapable of re-invention, signified by references to his continued employment of the polyptych format, tempera medium and gold-backgrounds, as though a fifteenth-century Venetian artist freely chose the form and content of his productions. In a recent semi-popular survey of Venetian art and architecture, Gentili embellished the Longhian view, describing Bartolomeo ‘diligently filling in the defined and neutral spaces of ...polyptychs with figures...’.¹⁴⁴ Gentili, whose views perhaps typify current Italian opinion of Bartolomeo’s work, supposed that Bartolomeo was at a loss following the passing of the Mantegnesque style and crushed by Bellini’s innovations;¹⁴⁵ but it will be shown that the Mantegnesque vocabulary was just one of several of idioms Bartolomeo employed concurrently – in early and mid-career he seems to have relished experimenting with different styles and formats, presumably within the constraints imposed by clients and market conditions. To be sure, the adoption of the oil medium would have promoted the softer forms that would be characteristic of sixteenth-century *Venezianità*; but instead, prudent Bartolomeo continued to exploit the crisp possibilities of tempera, of which he was an excellent technician, and he was not, of course, the only significant artist to stay with the ‘old’ medium. As Humfrey has noted, Bartolomeo ‘...exported more altarpieces and to a wider circle of foreign customers than any other painter of early renaissance Italy’¹⁴⁶ – clearly the artist headed a thriving enterprise – but Gentili dismissed this notable achievement as so many ‘commissions picked up here and there’.¹⁴⁷

The negative historiography has coloured modern connoisseurship relating to Bartolomeo’s oeuvre. In 1962 Pallucchini published *I Vivarini*, which includes a *catalogue raisonnée* of the Vivarini oeuvre from Giovanni d’Alemagna and Antonio, through to Bartolomeo and Alvise. Though undoubtedly a valuable tool with mainly reliable attributions, the catalogue has significant limitations with evident *lacunae* (remedied to some extent in the author’s 1967 article *Giunte ai Vivarini*), and meagre information on provenance, patronage and iconography. Although Pallucchini’s connoisseurship is generally admirable, the catalogue includes three inferior small Madonna panels which Pallucchini posited as an early style for the artist which merged the softer forms of Antonio with Bartolomeo’s Mantegnesque motifs, such as the fine linen veil. But by the early 1450s Bartolomeo’s artistic personality was already distinct

¹⁴⁴ Gentili (1997), p. 262.

¹⁴⁵ Gentili (1997), p. 264.

¹⁴⁶ Humfrey (1994), p. 17

¹⁴⁷ Gentili (1997), p. 264.

from that of Antonio and the presumed juvenilia has little in common with autograph works; for instance, the Berlin *Virgin and Child with the Instruments of the Passion* (fig. 0.27; Pallucchini cat. 129) is more convincingly attributed to Lazzaro Bastiani, an associate of the Vivarini shop, to whom several authors have given it.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, the St Louis *Virgin and Child* (fig. 0.28; Pallucchini cat. 130) bears little relation to any secure works by Bartolomeo, and the Strasbourg *Virgin and Child with St Joseph* (fig. 0.29; Pallucchini cat. 131) lacks the figural plasticity evident in Bartolomeo's earliest secure works. It is significant that none of these bears a Vivarini inscription and they should be excised from the oeuvre.¹⁴⁹ The inclusion of such poor works in the Pallucchini catalogue has done little for Bartolomeo's modern reputation. Although Pallucchini did highlight qualities in many of Bartolomeo's works and moderated some of Longhi's harshest criticisms, Pallucchini was ultimately influenced by Longhi's views and vocabulary – he stated that Bartolomeo's work expresses 'a religious sentiment almost plebeian in its simplicity' and, concluding the chapter on Bartolomeo, he supposed 'it would be unfair to underestimate Bartolomeo Vivarini as an artistic personality, even if the works of his last decade descend to a rather artisanal level.'¹⁵⁰

More recent research includes short articles revealing previously unknown works, provenances and so forth.¹⁵¹ Griffiths' MA dissertation, *Bartolomeo Vivarini* (1976, unpublished) provides a concise but invaluable survey of Bartolomeo's most important altarpieces and very briefly considers aspects of patronage, relations with frame-makers and workshop organisation, while articles by conservators, such as that by Maida (1994) and Dotallevi (1996) provide useful technical information. Of course, since the 1960s through the influence of scholars such as Baxandall, who famously described a fifteenth-century painting as 'the deposit of a social relationship'¹⁵² between the painter and his client, the significance of commissioners and their constraints and impositions have been more widely appreciated, although Hope (1981) and Gilbert (1998) have argued for artists' relative autonomy. Recent texts by Humfrey, including *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (1993), and Rossi, *Presenze Venete* (1994), discuss

¹⁴⁸ Testi (1515), pp. 500-1, forcefully rejected this work. A number of scholars attributed it to Bastiani, including Longhi; see N. Caravaglia (1967), p. 93 cat. 20, for a summary of critical opinions. In a recent article Casu (1996), p. 68, affirmed Bastiani's authorship.

¹⁴⁹ A *cartellino* does appear on the ledge of the Berlin picture (fig. 0.27), but the inscription is abraded.

¹⁵⁰ Pallucchini (1962), p. 54: 'un sentimento religioso d'una semplicità quasi popolare'; 'sarebbe ingiusto sottovalutare la personalità di Bartolomeo Vivarini anche se le opere dell'ultimo decennio scendono ad un livello piuttosto artigianale'.

¹⁵¹ For example Pallucchini (1967) and (1988), P. Sambin (1964) and Sponza (1999).

¹⁵² Baxandall (1988), p. 1.

Bartolomeo's altarpieces in the context of wider patterns of artistic patronage and production and helpfully include some altarpieces by Bartolomeo in appended catalogues.¹⁵³

Bartolomeo is also considered obliquely in modern monographs which treat other Vivarini: namely, Holgate's recent PhD thesis, *The Vivarini Workshop and its Patrons c.1430-50* (1999) which concentrates on the early Vivarini workshop, and John Steer's *Alvise Vivarini: His Life and Influence* (1982). Steer uniquely acknowledged the extent of Bartolomeo's success, '[in] the sixties and seventies [Bartolomeo] clearly enjoyed great success...[earning] between 1472 and 1482 a larger tally of metropolitan commissions than any other artist, not excluding Giovanni Bellini...'. However, Steer went on to denigrate the works as 'diagrams...deficient in just that physical realism of mass, space and light which is what makes Bellini's work so original' and he accounted for Bartolomeo's popularity in '...his ability to imitate the superficial aspects of a new style without understanding its true basis'.¹⁵⁴ That Bartolomeo should be dismissed in this way in a relatively modern text demonstrates the endurance of historiographic prejudices and a need for a more balanced appraisal of his work. Moreover, the recent monographic studies of the other Vivarini serve to highlight the lack of a modern, full-length study of Bartolomeo's contribution. The present dissertation therefore aims to respond to the gap in the research, and to consider Bartolomeo's altarpiece commissioners and iconographic programmes in detail for the first time.

Each of the case-studies which follows in chapters 1-7 aims to 'reconstruct' the altarpiece where its integrity has been compromised, and the characteristics of the original environment of the altarpiece are considered in relation to the formal qualities of the work. In some cases it has been necessary to identify, or confirm the identity of, the altarpiece commissioners, and in all cases primary sources have been used to learn more about the commissioners' motivations and concerns, and to reconstruct as far as possible the circumstances under which each altarpiece was commissioned. The iconographic and formal qualities of the works will be interpreted with reference to donors' devotional concerns, social values, and preparations for the hereafter, and themes include: the depiction of name-saints in altarpieces to 'represent' the patron and the patriline; the altarpiece as a functional element of a memorial complex, the funerary

¹⁵³ Humfrey (1993), p. 340 ff.

¹⁵⁴ J. Steer (1982), p. 5.

chapel; and any convergences between the iconography and the saints and doctrines favoured by the ecclesiastical institution in which the funerary chapel was sited. Each altarpiece is considered in its formal relation to the oeuvre as well as contemporary trends. Where an altarpiece suggests wider questions, such as the commercial aspects of the studio or the relationship of artist and frame-maker, these may be dealt with as part of the discussion in the chapter in hand.

Procurator Domenico Diedo and the *Polyptych of the Madonna* (1464)

*La 'Chapella de Santo Andrea del Lido fata in nome mio, de mi Domenego
Diedo, in nome de Madona Santa Maria'*¹

As Bartolomeo Vivarini's first major independent work and a piece of exceptional quality, the *Polyptych of the Madonna* (fig. 1.01) occupies an important place in his oeuvre. Inscribed: OPVS BA[R]TOLOMEI V[IV]ARINI DE MVRANO, MCCCCLXIII, the polyptych was originally made for a funerary chapel at the island monastery of the Charterhouse (Certosa) in Venice, which was asset-stripped and demolished between 1806 and 1815 following dissolution.² Only the major panels of the altarpiece survive (central panel 131 x 49 cm; side panels 107 x 33 cm), which depict the Madonna and Child, and Saints Andrew, John the Baptist, Dominic and Peter, against gold backgrounds. Five minor panels depicting post-biblical saints, and the elaborate gothic frame, crowned by a carved Crucifixion and four Old Testament prophets, were presumably destroyed shortly after the work entered State ownership in 1812.³

Given the loss of the integrity and physical context of the altarpiece, this chapter 'reconstructs' these as far as possible, and corrects the identity of the commissioner of the polyptych. The altarpiece is sometimes known as the *Morosini Polyptych* because of the longstanding erroneous identification of the chapel at the Certosa with the powerful patrician Morosini clan. The commissioner of the altarpiece will instead be identified as the Procurator of St Mark's Domenico Diedo, whose *juspatronatus* of the chapel was noted in a reliable early source, Coronelli's *Isolario dell'Atlante Veneto* (1696), and is confirmed by overlooked documents which pertain to the construction

¹ Research conducted for this chapter formed the basis of my article 'The patron of Bartolomeo Vivarini's 1464 polyptych for S. Andrea della Certosa, Venice', *Burlington Magazine*, 144 (2002), pp. 687-90.

² Bassi (1997), p. 177, notes demolition of the Certosa commenced in 1806 and McAndrew (1969) p. 18, n. 14, observes it must have been concluded before 1815.

³ Maida (1994), p. 9.

and furnishing of the chapel, and the creation of its altarpiece by the ‘master of the *anchona*’ as Diedo called the artist.⁴ As the Diedo documents represent the only significant contemporary records of an extant Venetian work by Bartolomeo, they are especially significant to the study of the artist. The iconographic and formal qualities of the altarpiece will be interpreted with reference to the donor’s piety, social values, and preparations for the hereafter, and the contractual terms will be discussed in relation to the development of Bartolomeo’s career.

The Original Form of the *Polyptych of the Madonna*

The complete altarpiece is known only through a meticulous engraving commissioned by Sasso in the late eighteenth century for his unfinished work *Venezia Pittrice* (fig. 1.02).⁵ As the engraving accurately records details of the surviving panels (for instance, the tooling pattern on haloes follows that of the original painting), it may be relied upon for the purposes of “reconstructing” the polyptych. The impressive gothic frame presented the five main panels of the polyptych in wide gothic arches, and five smaller panels with half figures of saints in ogee trefoils in its gables. Slender polygonal piers separated the main panels of the altarpiece, and culminated in pinnacles; the central panel was crowned with a carved Crucifixion, flanked by two identical female figures (Marys?), whilst the four side panels were surmounted by prophets, indistinguishable apart from the names inscribed on their banderols which identified them as: Joshua, (*Josue Profeta*), Noah (*Noué Profeta*), Jonah (*Iona Profeta*) and Isaiah (*Ysyas Profeta*). The *predella* and other surfaces of the frame were pierced with geometric motifs, and foliate crockets emerged from its sides and gables. From the engraving the lost half-figures of saints may be identified as: St Helen (extreme left), wearing wimple and crown, holding a cross and a book; St Justina of Padua, with loose hair, decorative robe, and attributes of martyr’s palm, crown, and sickle-like sword; St Anthony Abbot (centre), identified by his *tau*-shaped stick, skullcap, habit with cowl, long beard and book; the Magdalene, with ointment jar, loose hair, elaborate robe and book; and matronly Saint Clare (extreme right), in medium-dark nun’s habit, holding a book and a slender cross, similar to that held by St Francis in the Vivarini’s contemporary *Osimo Polyptych*.

⁴ ‘ell maestro dell anchona’, see appendix 5.

⁵ Copies of the print may be found at BMC, Stampe C2 no 28. It is also discussed by Maida (1994), p. 9 ff., fig. 1 and Humfrey (1993), pp. 170-71, fig. 158.

The original arrangement of the main panels remains unresolved. In an article on the restoration of the altarpiece, Maida favoured the current arrangement – (left to right) Andrew, the Baptist, Dominic and Peter – which affords compositional symmetry: turned slightly inward, the brother apostles Andrew and Peter parenthesise the composition, whereas the more frontal poses of the Baptist and Dominic seem suited to internal positions.⁶ However, this arrangement is contradicted by the engraving, which shows the saints in the following order (left to right): Andrew, the Baptist, Peter and Dominic. Given the accuracy of the engraving, it must have faithfully recorded the arrangement of the altarpiece, at least as it appeared in the later eighteenth century. Unfortunately the textual sources are ambiguous, Boschini and Zanetti concurred with each other, and their description might be interpreted as noting the inside pair (left to right) of saints followed by the outside pair (left to right): ‘... in the centre is Mary with the Child, and to the sides St John the Baptist and Peter [*and?*] St Andrew and Dominic.’⁷ Such a reading would confirm the arrangement shown in the engraving.

However, Maida hypothesised that the polyptych had been rearranged before the engraving was made.⁸ An eighteenth-century record would appear to corroborate this theory, for it indicates the donor’s endowment was earmarked for the ‘restoration of the altar[piece]s of St Mary...’, which could well have involved dismantling and (unintentional) reordering.⁹ But *lacunae* in the pictorial surface noted in an inspector’s report of 1797 indicate no restoration had been recently undertaken.¹⁰ Moreover, the arrangement of the engraving is more satisfactory than that proposed by Maida with regard to the close proximity of St Dominic to St Clare, onomastic saint of the donor’s wife. As the couple planned to share the chapel’s only tomb (see below), it would seem

⁶ Maida (1994), p. 11.

⁷ ‘Nella Capella Morosini, detta il Capitolo, v’è la Tavola dell’Altare in cinque partimenti, nel cui mezzo sta Maria, con il Bambino. Dalle parti S Giovanni Battista, S Pietro S Andrea S Domenico & è opera à tempera fatta l’anno 1464 da Bartolomeo Vivarini.’ Boschini (1674), S Croce, p. 49; ‘Nell’Isola della Certosa, nel Capitolo, evvi la tavola in cinque compartì con la Madonna, S. Giambastista, S. Pietro, Sant’Andrea, e S. Domenico. E dipinta sicuramente a tempera sull’antico stile; e sotto sta scritto: /*Opus Bartolomei Vivarini de / Murano. 1464.*’ Zanetti (1771), p. 24

⁸ Maida (1994), p. 11.

⁹ ‘ristauri delli Altari Sta. Maria...’. As also cited above, a 1790 copy of a document dated 1 March 1770. ASV, S. Andrea del Lido, b. 52, (papers 1780-89, no. 6).

¹⁰ ‘Alla Certosa, nel Capitolo di que’ Padri, la palla in cinque compartì dipinta a tempera dal Vivarino, con la B Vergine, e vari Santi, è danneggiata molto nel pannello azzurro di essa Vergine, il quale è quasi affatto perduto.’ Inspector Francesco Mangiotto, dated 23 April 1797, ASV, Inquisitori di Stato, b. 909. Reference also cited by Maida (1994) p. 9, n. 3.

appropriate their heavenly sponsors appeared together in the altarpiece. A further argument in favour of the arrangement of the engraving, is the more balanced arrangement of chromatic values, as Maida concedes;¹¹ the blue-black and green of St Andrew's garments would be counter-balanced with the black of Dominic's mantle, and the Baptist's rose-coloured drape with the gold of St Peter's.

Patrician Patronage of the Certosa and the Provenance of the *Polyptych of the Madonna*

The Venetian Charterhouse (figs. 1.03 and 1.04) had been established in the 1420s on the urging of the reformist Franciscan preacher Bernardine of Siena, whose proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Venetian Government and confirmed by Pope Martin V.¹² The island of Sant'Andrea del Lido, site of a waning Augustinian house dedicated to St Andrew, was selected for the new monastery. The location was appropriate as the Carthusian Order, established by St Bruno in 1084 under the Benedictine Rule, maintained a reputation for adherence to its founding principles which prescribed an austere, hermetical existence.¹³ Like Carthusian houses elsewhere in Italy and Europe, the Venice Certosa enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the ruling class, and from its inception was supported by key figures of the local political and ecclesiastical establishment, including Bishop Lorenzo Giustiniani who granted it important privileges and freedoms.¹⁴ The Bishop was a close associate of Prior Francesco Trevisan (Venice Prior 1448-53 and 1457-71), incumbent at the time the *Polyptych of the Madonna* was made; Trevisan had formerly headed the Bologna charterhouse and was possibly the *de facto* commissioner of the Vivarini brothers' Bologna *Certosa Polyptych* (fig. 0.01; 1450).¹⁵ The priors of the Venice Certosa frequently hailed from the local nobility and were invested by the Doge; and the most prominent patrician families – notably the Morosini, Barbarigo and Giustiniani – funded the general building project of the Certosa, as well as erecting private chapels there. In his 1696 *Isolario...*, which includes a concise history of the monastery, Coronelli observed:

¹¹ Maida (1994), p. 11.

¹² Coronelli (1696), II, p. 44; F. Corner (1749) and *idem.* (1758), p. 62.

¹³ McAndrew (1969), p. 18; Rosenberg (1976), pp. 332-33.

¹⁴ A comparable foundation was the Certosa of Ferrara, established in 1452 and patronised by Borso d'Este. See Rosenberg (1976).

¹⁵ Humfrey (1993) p. 163, hypothesised Trevisan was the commissioner of the Bologna altarpiece, see also below. For Lorenzo Giustiniani, see introductory chapter and chapter 4 here.

‘...many patricians...made their pious preference for such an exemplary Order evident with the [erection of] magnificent monuments...’.¹⁶

The Carthusians’ ascetic lifestyle and intellectual piety appealed to the Venetian patriciate, whilst the monastery’s isolation, affording difficult and limited access to the laity, perhaps enhanced its pious and exclusive aura. Separation defined the ecclesiastical space itself: as was customary in Carthusian establishments, the church was divided by a screen so laity and religious were separated during worship, and women were excluded altogether from the monastery church.¹⁷ Exclusivity attached even to a humble burial in the Certosa’s *Galilea*, the monks’ own burial plot bounded by the large cloister which comprised their dwellings. Interment here was a special concession on the part of the monastery extended to just four lay individuals per annum.¹⁸ Procurator Domenico Morosini, the noted political and religious philosopher, was interred with ostentatious humility in the *Galilea*, as stipulated in his will.¹⁹ Morosini was, however, later reburied more auspiciously in a sarcophagus installed in the wing of the small cloister adjacent to the monastery church, close to the entrance to what should rightly be called the ‘Diedo chapel’.²⁰ This section of the cloister was a veritable pantheon of Venetian renaissance luminaries, as Coronelli reported:

In the ground...of the aforesaid cloister there are the graves of Giacomo Barbarigo (who died on campaign in Peloponnese in 1466)...Of the great warrior and politician Andrea Morosini, who died in 1454, of Lunardo Giustiniano, Procurator of St Mark’s, brother of the Patriarch-Saint and father of the famous Bernardo, who was also a great benefactor of the monastery...and three of the House of Marcello...There are also many others, who are omitted here for brevity, and in a

¹⁶ ‘...molti Patritij...illustrandolo con magnifici monumenti, facero conoscere la loro divota inclination verso Religione tanto esemplare’. Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

¹⁷ E. Paoletti (1837), I, p. 204.

¹⁸ Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

¹⁹ On March 22, 1509, Sanudo recorded: ‘In questa mattina fo sepolto S. Domenego Morexini procurator vestito solum da batuto a la Certosa in mezzo il campo santo’. M. Sanudo *Diarii* Lib. VIII, mss. pp. 18 and p. 20. Cicogna (1827), II, p. 96.

²⁰ ‘Nel choistro attacco alla chiesa di sant’Andrea posta in un’isola detta la Certosa in faccia d’una cappella dishabitata e cadente in cui v’è isolato il deposito di Orsatto Giustiniano, v’è a terra appresso ad un’altra [capella] più alla cappella sopradetta vicina ...una sepoltura di marmo schietto, spezzata, e con arpicci ricongiunta con l’arma Moresini nel mezzo con fogliami, ec. Appiedi della quale arma si legge: SP. DOMINICI ET AVGVSTINI MAVRECENI FRATRVM ET SVORVM HEREDVM...’ Vincenzo Pasquaglio cited by Cicogna, who was presumably reliant on second-hand accounts of the inscriptions because the Certosa buildings had been destroyed before he undertook the task of recording them. Cicogna (1827), II, p. 97.

casket is preserved the embalmed body of Agostin Barbarigo who died in the naval battle of Lepanto in 1571, after having secured that glorious victory.²¹

The chapel with the Vivarini polyptych was one of three erected in the 1460s that projected from this venerable wing of the small cloister; in each case the *juspatronatus* had been extended to a Procurator of St Mark's. The first chapel, that adjacent to the church, was the burial place of Procurator Francesco Barbarigo, whose sons Agostino and Marco both became doges. Coronelli records numerous Barbarigo monuments in this chapel, including that of the Dogaressa, wife of Agostino, who contributed handsomely to the reconstruction of the new church.²² It is not clear what altarpiece or other decoration was employed in this chapel.

The second, central chapel in the small cloister was that of Knight and Procurator Orsato Giustiniani (d. c.1464), successful politician, diplomat and military leader, and a relation of the saintly Lorenzo Giustiniani. Here a Lombardesque relief *Pietà and Saints* (Seminario Patriarcale, Venice) may have functioned as the altarpiece, but the chapel was dominated by Orsato's much-admired tomb by Antonio Rizzo (dismantled) with its effigy of the deceased upon a sarcophagus which was set around with Virtues.²³ However fitting for a man distinguished by his princely magnificence, the ostentatious table-tomb was exceptional in Venice, and was presumably rendered acceptable by Giustiniani's status as a war hero, for military leaders' tombs were generally grander than those of their contemporaries (aside, of course, from the formally dissimilar ducal

²¹ 'In terra...nel detto picciolo Chiostro vi sono le Sepolture di Giacomo Barbarigo; (che morì in una giornata campale in Morea 1466)...D'Andrea Morosini gran Guerriero, e molto politico, morto nel 1454; Di Lunardo Giustiniano Procuratore di S Marco, Fratello del Santo Patriarca, e Padre del famoso Bernardo, gran benefattore anch'esso del Monastero...e trè della Casa Marcello ... Ve ne sono anche altri molti, che per brevità si omettono, ed in una Cassa si conserva imbalsamato il Corpo di quell'Agostin Barbarigo, che morì nella Battaglia navale à Curzolari* del 1571, doppo haver esso dato motivo a quella gloriosa Vittoria.' Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

*The battle of Lepanto was alternatively referred to as the battle of the 'Curzolari' islands, today called the Oxia islands.

²² Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

²³ Paoletti (1893) p. 146, hypothesised the *Pietà* was made for the Giustiniani chapel on the basis of its Certosa provenance and the inclusion of Lorenzo Giustiniani. A later work in the Giustiniani chapel was the sixteenth-century 'tavola' Boschini saw there, lost (?), by Giambattista Maganza, which in 1771 Zanetti saw over the door of the Diedo chapel. Boschini *Santa Croce* (1674), p. 48 and Zanetti (1972), p. 251. These sources do not imply the 'tavola' was necessarily an altarpiece, despite Zorzi's suggestion to the contrary, (2001) p. 267 and n. 22.

tombs).²⁴ Coronelli reported the Giustiniani family were also important benefactors of the Certosa.²⁵

From the surviving plans and other scant sources, it seems reasonable to conclude the Giustiniani and Barbarigo funerary chapels were fairly large and lavishly ‘furnished’ with monuments, not untypical for Carthusian and Mendicant Observant foundations where wealthy high-status patrons attracted by the Orders’ virtuous rigour, paradoxically compromised the ideal simplicity of the churches with ostentatious decoration. (Of course, Doge Moro’s patronage of San Giobbe and his appropriation of its presbytery as a mausoleum is perhaps the best-known local example of this tendency.)²⁶

Finally, Coronelli noted Procurator Domenico Diedo’s *juspatronatus* of the third chapel in the small cloister, the one set furthest from the church:

‘[margin: *The fathers’ chapterhouse (capitolo)*] There is that [chapel], which Domenico Diedo, Procurator of St Mark’s, had erected with its altar[piece], which now serves the fathers for their chapter meetings on the appointed days’.²⁷

On surviving plans this chapel is marked ‘Capitolo’, indicating the chapel’s function in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it was in the ‘capitolo’ that both Boschini and Zanetti saw Bartolomeo’s *Polyptych of the Madonna*.²⁸ The reliability of Coronelli’s brief, but historically-engaged account, is supported by his evident use of the monastery archive (now reputedly much depleted).²⁹

In fact, the previously-unpublished will and personal account book of Domenico Diedo (appendices 4 and 5) emphasise the Procurator’s agency in the construction of the chapel dedicated to the Madonna at the Certosa. In his will Diedo requested burial ‘in

²⁴ On the Giustiniani tomb see McAndrew (1969), fig. 24; and Zorzi (2001), p. 264 and p. 267.

²⁵ Coronelli (1696) II, p. 45.

²⁶ For the Carthusians, see Rosenberg (1976), p. 333.

²⁷ ‘[margin: *Capitolo de’ Padri*] V’è quella [cappella], che fece ergere Domenico Diedo Procuratore di San Marco con Altare, ed hora serve a’ Padri per radunarvi il Capitolo ne’ giorni destinati.’ Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

²⁸ See above.

²⁹ Coronelli evidently accessed the monastery archive as he cited directly from a testament held there ‘trovandosi frà gl’altri nell’Archivio del Monastero il Testamento d’un tale Tomaso della Figara...’ (It is not suggested this testament is relevant to the current arguments.) Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

our chapel of St Mary built by me', and his accounts list numerous entries for the 'Chapel at Santo Andrea del Lido made in my name, by me Domenico Diedo in the name of Madonna Saint Mary'.³⁰ Payments were made to several craftsmen including the unnamed 'master of the *anchona*' between 1463-64, which coincides perfectly with the 1464 date of the altarpiece (appendix 5). Diedo also planned for the future upkeep of his chapel, exhorting his testamentary executors to arrange for the timely sale of 'all my furniture, as well as wrought silverware, some rings, jewels, robes of both silk and cloth, and all the other household effects'.³¹ The substantial proceeds were to be invested in perpetuity, with the interest used for charitable works and the maintenance and illumination of the chapel:

'In relation to our chapel of Saint Mary, of San Andrea de Lido, two gold ducats per annum to be given to the incumbent prior to provide for the said chapel as necessary, and any remaining [cash] be spent as the aforesaid [prior] sees fit on his monastery'.³²

Over the following centuries, payments were duly made to the Certosa in accordance with this instruction, with one payment record explicitly linking the Diedo fund with the chapterhouse and the altar of the Madonna.³³

Despite Coronelli's affirmation that Domenico Diedo was the patron of the chapel that became the chapterhouse, art historians have associated its altarpiece with the powerful and sprawling Morosini clan, since Boschini stated in 1674 that the polyptych was found in the 'Morosini Chapel, called [the] chapterhouse'.³⁴ The source of Boschini's mistake may have been the above-noted Morosini sarcophagus close to the chapel

³⁰ 'nella nostra capella de Santa Maria per mi fabricada', appendix 4; 'Chapella de Santo Andrea del lido fata in nome mio de mi Domenego Diedo in nome de Madona Santa Maria' appendix 5.

³¹ 'tutto il mio mobele, come sonno arzenti lavoradi, et alcuni anelli, et zoiette, vestamente, si de seda como de panno, et tutte altre mie arnixie de casa', appendix 4.

³² 'Apresso la Capella nostra de S Maria de San Andrea de Lido ducati dui doro all'anno d'esser dadi al Prior se trovera per provedere alla detta Capella di quello l'havera bisogno et sora avanzando alcuna cosa, sianno spesi dove al detto [prior] parerà ben del monastero suo.', appendix 4.

³³ 'Sara pagato ogni anno addi 1 Marzo / per li sottoscritti obblighi di sue comissarie / Al convento di S Andrea della Certosa / Per Legati/ Di Comissaria [...] / Messr Domenico Diedo Procuratore per / Luminaria, e ristauri delli Altari / Sta. Maria, St. Agostin, e Sn. Domenico / serve per Capitolo de' Padri.' A 1790 copy of a document dated March 1, 1770. ASV, S. Andrea del Lido, b. 52, (papers 1780-89, no. 6) Similar records from the *procuratie* refer only to the altar of the Madonna. As the terms of Diedo's will allowed the prior to spend any surplus as he saw fit, the surplus on this occasion was evidently earmarked for the repair of several altarpieces.

³⁴ See above for Boschini. Sansovino made no mention of either the chapel or its altarpiece. (Martinioni edition) pp. 215-18, and Ridolfi likewise omitted it from his lists of works by Bartolomeo and the spurious Luigi Vivarini. Ridolfi (1999), pp. 36-39.

entrance. With the exception of Boschini and Coronelli, early commentators tended not to associate the chapel with a particular family, which may suggest that any (floor) tomb inscription or insignia had been obscured, perhaps by a carpet or furniture, such as the chapter's benches.³⁵ In order not to appear vainglorious, Domenico Diedo may have limited or excluded the reproduction of his family crest in the chapel, as Procurator of St Mark's Pietro Priuli (d. 1493) would proscribe his family insignia in the funerary chapel he planned at San Michele in Isola.³⁶

Modern scholars spuriously affirmed the association of this chapel with the Morosini by frequent repetition of Boschini's inaccuracy, whilst the Certosa's complicated building history and its complete destruction must have compounded the confusion.³⁷ In his important study of the Certosa complex, McAndrew identified it as the funerary chapel of a certain Marco Morosini, although evidence demonstrates that Morosini instead paid for the reconstruction of the chancel of the monastery church. Marco Morosini's will of 1493 records that the building of his chapel was the occasion for the rebuilding of the church itself, an assertion corroborated by a contemporary chronicle and a seventeenth-century(?) record found in the Certosa archive.³⁸ Morosini funded a new choir and perhaps a cupola – features appropriate to the chancel of the main church, but not a little remarkable in a private chapel.³⁹ Coronelli's account categorically confutes McAndrew's hypothesis: Coronelli recorded Marco Morosini's patronage of the chancel of the Certosa monastery church, describing its choir and noting the tombs

³⁵ Benches used for chapter meetings were recorded in a inventory on the dissolution of the monastery, although these were found in the downstairs area of the prior's cell where the chapter had latterly held its meetings. ASV, Demanio, b. 382, fasc. II 2/20.

³⁶ Goffen (1990), p. 176 and p. 316, n. 73; Meneghin (1962), I, pp. 310-11 and p. 322.

³⁷ It seems that Cicogna, for instance, was obliged to rely on old and /or third-party sources for the Certosa entries.

³⁸ See McAndrew (1969) pp. 15-28; pp. 22-23, and p. 23 n. 34; Morosini testified to '...la gran spesa ho facto ne la Cappella, per esser sta cason de la renovation de la Chiesa, che senza mio principio non si potea far...', he would be buried '...in larca che se ha far nel compir de la capella ...et posta in mezzo del pian de la Capella', testament dated January 31, 1493. Cited P. Paoletti (1893), II, p.226, n. 6. Il Malipiero recorded: '1490 – Marco Morosini q. Polo, ha restaurà la giesia di Croeschieri...e quella de Sant'Andrea de Lido'. Cited Paoletti, *ibid*. The seventeenth-century document states: '... Marco Morosini con suo testamento ...lascia al monastero ducati d'oro 200 oltre altre cose per adornamento della Chiesa con obbligo di mansionaria perpetua. Oltra il detto legato, questo Sigore fabricò a sue spese la Capella Maggiore di nostra Chiesa come appare del suo testamento.' Venice, ASV, S Andrea del Lido, b. 9.

³⁹ P. Paoletti (1893), II, p.226, n. 6, cited works including restoration of the 'concolo', which he translates as 'cupola'. McAndrew (1969), p. 22, stated the restoration funded by Morosini included a 'choir and apse'. McAndrew's assertion that the chapel housed the tomb of Nicola Morosini seems to be based on a misreading of Cicogna. In fact, Cicogna gave no indication as to the whereabouts of this tomb. McAndrew (1969), p. 23, n. 34 and Cicogna (1827), II, p. 75, no. 19.

of various Morosini family members, including – most significantly – that of Marco himself in the *cappella maggiore*.⁴⁰

Domenico Diedo and the Construction and Decoration of his Chapel of the Madonna

Before examining the Chapel of the Madonna and the commissioning of its altarpiece in detail, I will set these in context by briefly summarising the biography and career of the chapel's founder.

Domenico Diedo was born in about 1401 into a well-established Venetian patrician family which had counted amongst the noble class from the time of the *serrata* in the late thirteenth century (fig. 1.05).⁴¹ Domenico's father worked in an official capacity in various parts of the Venetian empire, undertaking high-ranking offices such as *Podestà* and *Capitano delle galere*.⁴² His mother must have died young, when Domenico was a small child, as his father remarried in 1408.⁴³ In 1425 Domenico himself married Chiara Malipiero q. Lorenzo.⁴⁴ Chiara wrote her first will in 1433, amending it six years later, which could indicate pregnancies at these dates, although later documents indicate the couple remained without surviving children.⁴⁵ Domenico led a distinguished military and political career, also performing the roles of *Capitano delle galere* and *Podestà* in various foreign colonies.⁴⁶ Covering a period of some two decades, his personal accounts detail his business deals, investments, rentals and household expenses. Although he dealt with a range of business associates, Diedo's accounts illustrate the close-knit network in which a fifteenth-century Venetian patrician operated, for instance, he had dealings with the banker Nicolò Bernardo, whose own patron saint appears in Bartolomeo's *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01; chapter 7).

⁴⁰ 'Nell'altra metà della Chiesa s'osserva il Coro de' Monaci, tutto di Noce rimesso à figure, con Colonnati, e nel mezzo il Sepolcro di Girolamo Morosini, che vi fece il Pavimento di marmi. La Cappella maggiore fù opera sontuosa della pietà di Marco Morosini, che vi hà il suo Sepolcro, dov'è la famosa Palla di Marco Basaiti...'. Coronelli (1696), II, p. 45.

⁴¹ Domenico Diedo's date of birth has been calculated from the date of his presentation at the bala d'oro in 1419 when he would have been around 18 years of age, see below. For general information on the family, see M. Barbaro, BMC, *Arbori de' Patritii veneti*, III (DI-DU), 1 r.

⁴² F. Rossi (1991), p. 761.

⁴³ See below.

⁴⁴ M. Barbaro, ASV, *Arbori de' Patritii veneti*, 'Diedo', M, p. 233.

⁴⁵ The first date on the will appears to be 1433; numerous amendments were made to it in 1439. It is not stated whether the testator was pregnant. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1230, no. 110.

⁴⁶ F. Rossi (1991), p. 761.

On 15 April 1464, by then in his early sixties, Domenico Diedo was elected Procurator *de supra* under Doge Cristoforo Moro (1462-71). The office of Procurator of St Mark's was the second in prestige the Republic could bestow, a reward for distinguished public service.⁴⁷ Domenico's brother Antonio, who predeceased him, had also been elected to the office. As a Procurator, Domenico Diedo would have enjoyed privileges and pomp akin to those of the Doge himself and, like the Doge, he was appointed for life and was obliged to sign a *promissione*.⁴⁸ The ancient office had also accrued considerable executive powers; in his study of the procurators, Mueller examined their financial power as trustees and executors of the estates of the wealthy, whilst Holgate has recently emphasised their role as artistic commissioners on behalf of the State in the maintenance and transformation of the buildings in the *area marciana* (although by the 1460s new building work and decoration of the basilica, with the exception of altarpieces added by Doge Moro, had come to a virtual standstill.)⁴⁹ Domenico was one of four councillors set to accompany Doge Moro on a crusade to the Holy Land in 1464, although the project was aborted on the death of Pope Pius II.⁵⁰ Diedo himself died in 1466, the increasingly spare and scrawling script in his account book from late 1465 suggests infirmity during his final months. Had he lived to a greater age, there is every possibility that he would have become doge, as the procuratorship was a 'common stepping-stone to the dogeship'.⁵¹

An efficient administrator, in the early 1460s Diedo had made careful preparations for a good death. He composed his will in March 1465, sometimes employing the first person plural, dogal style, no doubt conscious of the eventual semi-public nature of the document.⁵² The funeral was decorously choreographed – it would be sufficiently modest to conform with Diedo's inclination for religious observance, but not so mean as to offend the dignity of his high office:

⁴⁷ Mueller (1971), pp. 105-6.

⁴⁸ For a concise history of the office of Procurator of St Mark, see Howard (1975), pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ Mueller (1971).

Holgate's comments, (2001), p. 22, are made in the context of a study discussing an earlier Procuratore *de supra*, Marco da Molino, who commissioned the *St Jerome* altarpiece (1441, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) from Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini for his funerary chapel in S. Stefano.

On Moro's altarpieces, see Humfrey (1993), p. 124.

⁵⁰ M. Barbaro *Arbori...* ASV, *Diedo*, M, p. 233 and *idem.*, BMC, III, DI-DU, 'M', also Da Mosto (1977), p. 181.

⁵¹ Mueller (1971), p. 106.

⁵² Muir (1984), p. 299.

When my body is separated from this life, I want it robed in the habit of the Scuola of St Mark, where I am a brother, and brought to the monastery of Santo Andrea del Lido, and buried there in our chapel of St Mary built by me, and accompanied to that place by the aforesaid Scuola with the congregation of our parish, bearing ten ceremonial candles.⁵³

Two hundred masses would be said for his soul by 'observant monks', presumably in various observant foundations around the city, and charitable provisions, generous and wide-ranging even by contemporary standards, would guarantee the performance of further countless masses. Of the numerous donations to religious institutions, mendicant and observant orders feature prominently. This may be interpreted in the context of the prevailing religious fervour which had been aroused earlier in the century by firebrand preachers such as Giovanni de Dominici (d. 1419) and Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444). As was noted in the introduction, the cult of the Observant Franciscan was espoused by some of the most influential Venetians, including prominent members of the Giustiniani family and Doge Moro himself. The patrician class favoured the observant and ascetic orders, including the Carthusians, in their testaments, on the premise their souls were better served by masses performed by the most virtuous and exemplary religious.⁵⁴

An uxorious man, Diedo named Chiara his wife as the first of his testamentary commissioners and his exclusive burial partner: 'I want nobody else to be put in the tomb made by me in the aforesaid chapel, except, if she wishes to be placed there, my consort the aforesaid Madonna Chiara...'⁵⁵ Chiara had anticipated this arrangement in her will of 1464.⁵⁶ The couple's choice of religious institutions for the saying of masses are similar. Chiara's earlier will (1433, revised 1439), included a donation of bread or other necessities to the brothers at the Certosa, indicating the couple's long-held support for the monastery.⁵⁷

⁵³ 'Separado el corpo mio de questa vita, quello voglio sia vestido della cappa della scola de S Marco dove son fradello, et quello condur al monastier de Santo Andrea del lido, e li sepellido nella nostra capella de Santa Maria per mi fabricada, in quello luogo acompagnado dala scola dita con la congregation della nostra contrada, con dopieri x', appendix 4.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Rosenberg (1976), p. 332-33.

⁵⁵ 'In la sepoltura per mi fata, in dita capella non voglio mai alcun altro sia messo in quello excepto, si la predita Madonna Chiara nostra consorte voglia, in quella esser posta...', appendix 4.

⁵⁶ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 46, no. 34.

⁵⁷ 'lasso duc x doro ai frari di Certosa che sta a Sant Andrea del Lido per comprarli pan o spender in quello parera i sia de pluy bisogno'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1230, no. 110

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It was during the last years of his life that Diedo oversaw the construction and decoration of his funerary chapel. Diedo's heirless status may have motivated his personal agency in the Certosa chapel's inception and rapid completion during his lifetime – many testators instead left the construction of funerary chapels to their commissioners but, as will be seen in the case of Ferigo Corner, not always with expeditious results (chapter 3). Lacking direct heirs, Diedo must have had fewer qualms than many of his contemporaries in spending his wealth on a substantial private chapel, as he would not have had the common preoccupation to maintain a patrimony intact.

Although McAndrew convincingly argued that the three small-cloister chapels were converted from an existing ecclesiastical building and plans do suggest the form of a presbytery with two side chapels (fig. 1.03), Diedo employed the verb “fabrichar” in his accounts and testament, which suggests his chapel was a new building – or, at least, a very extensive reconstruction.⁵⁸ The accounts show the chapel took little more than a year to erect: the first relevant payment being made on 1 April 1463, and building must have concluded before 30 June 1464 when Diedo paid for the installation of the altarpiece. The chapel was probably constructed in brick, the usual building material for contemporary Venetian ecclesiastical buildings, which would have facilitated progress. It seems Prior Francesco Trevisan managed the construction phase, as payments were not made by Diedo for specified labour and materials, but rather to ‘prior don Francesco’ or his representative ‘per fabrichar’.

It seems reasonable to suppose Trevisan oversaw the (re)construction of all three chapels, so they would have appeared fairly uniform from the exterior. Plans and schematic general views of the Certosa dating from the seventeenth century show the small cloister was formed of an early-renaissance arcade with slender columns and round arches, which appears to have functioned as a portico to the three chapels (fig. 1.04). The views also show the Barbarigo and Giustiniani chapels with pitched roofs

⁵⁸ McAndrew (1969) p. 23, notes that there were originally two churches on the island, the original Augustinian church of Sant'Andrea and a thirteenth-century church dedicated to Saints Eufemia, Dorotea, Tecla and Erasma. Observing the form of the three chapels on monastery plans, which resembles a chancel comprised of *capella maggiore* and side chapels, McAndrew hypothesised these had been converted from the thirteenth-century building.

and their gable lines adorned with a blind gothic arcade moulding, of a type seen on *quattrocento* brick churches. However, the Diedo chapel appears truncated and covered with what appears to be a lean-to roof; as this seems an unlikely gothic architectonic feature, it is probable the vault of the Diedo chapel was replaced with a hasty lean-to at a late date. In fact, records show that by the seventeenth century there were serious problems with the repair of the monastery buildings on this exposed island, and whereas the Giustiniani chapel was described as 'derelict' in 1739, Diedo's perpetual endowment allowed the appropriated 'chapterhouse' to be repaired as necessary.⁵⁹ There is no indication on the general views of any window in the chapel, although we can reasonably suppose the chapel apse was pierced with gothic lancets.

Whilst Prior Francesco probably took charge of the construction, Diedo's records show the Procurator was personally responsible for the fitting and decoration of his chapel. He employed various craftsmen and his purchases include stone and wooden panels. Although he referred to none of the artisans by name, he deferred to the respected status of the master craftsmen by referring to 'el maestro' in Bartolomeo's case, and 'maistro taiapiera' for the mason. The accounts include various fixtures and liturgical items, including a carved wooden portal, a brass oil lamp (*zexendello de laton*), gold cross, an altar-cloth (*paramento dell'altare*) embroidered in gold thread (*fixi* or *fixi d'oro*), and the altarpiece (*anchona*) with its painted cover (*chortina*). The chapel evidently communicated with the small cloister by means of a carved wooden portal, for which payments were made to both a carpenter (*marangon*) and carver (*intaiador*). Various payments were made to a master stonemason, although their scope is not clear. Early sources did not record any inscription or tomb in the Diedo Chapel and we may thus hypothesise that Diedo was buried in a modest floor tomb of the type usually favoured by the Venetian patriciate, quite in contrast to the grand tomb of Orsato Giustiniani in the larger neighbouring chapel.

From altarpieces by Bartolomeo which have remained *in situ*, it is evident the artist was particularly attentive to the characteristics of the space in which his works were to be set (see chapters 3 and 7). Likewise, the horizontal format of the *Polyptych of the Madonna* would have been designed according to the proportions of the chapel for which it was made, with its low vault (even before any modification to the roof). We

⁵⁹ The Giustiniani chapel was described as 'disabitata e cadente' in a source cited by Cicogna (1827), II, p. 97.

may contrast this with the emphatic verticality of the otherwise formally-similar *St Augustine Polyptych*, a towering structure built to stand out against a large expanse of wall which terminated in a very high vault (fig. 2.01; chapter 2). Further, given the way the *St Mark* and *Ca' Bernardo* altarpieces snugly fit their respective Frari apses (figs. 3.01 and 7.02), it may be assumed Diedo's altarpiece was similarly calculated to span the apse for which it was designed.

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Diedo's records of payment for the altarpiece represent significant new findings for Bartolomeo Vivarini, as contract details of his employment as an independent master are known in only two other cases: the destroyed 1468 Abraham narratives for the Scuola Grande di San Marco and the 1484 *Dormition of the Virgin* for the Certosa near Padua (fig. 8.01). The Diedo account book is the earliest of these, and is the only substantial contemporary record of an extant Venetian work. It captures the moment when the artist was engaged in establishing his own home market, as he earned his independence from Antonio.

According to their agreement, Diedo would pay the artist in three instalments, the first of which was an initial deposit paid on 31 August 1463, perhaps for materials. Further instalments would be paid according to progress on the work: 'on the 31st day [August 1463], in cash from the cash box, for the master to paint the *ancona*, 5 ducat instalment, it was agreed he would have 24 ducats in total'.⁶⁰ Payment by instalments according to progress was not unusual, and would also be stipulated in the contract made with the Scuola Grande di San Marco.⁶¹ The artist duly received a further five ducats from Diedo on November 10, and the balance of fourteen ducats on 4 June 1464. A further payment on 30 June 1464 to paint the altarpiece cover (*chortina*) and set the altarpiece on the altar was also made presumably to Bartolomeo.⁶² The *chortina*, which served to protect and conceal the altarpiece, was probably made of linen, and painted *a guazzo* in

⁶⁰ 'à dì 31 dito [= Austo 1463] per cassa contadi ave el maistro depenzer l anchona per parte duc. 5 doro fo de pato dovera aver in tuto duc. 24', appendix 5.

⁶¹ 'El pagamento daver in questo modo che subito che i averano prinzipia a desegnar abia per chapara duc.^{li} 5, e chome j averano conpido de desegnar abia duc.^{li} 12 ½. El resto de pagamento de aver de tempo in tempo secondo che landara lavorando...' Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 266, n. 40, and P. Paoletti (1929), p. 82. See appendix 1.

⁶² 'per depenzer la chortina e conzar la palla alla alltar', appendix 5.

monochrome.⁶³ This reference serves also to remind us of the 'minor' painted objects, banners, furniture and so forth which Bartolomeo's shop may have produced in some quantities.⁶⁴

The payment records demonstrate Bartolomeo took about ten months to execute the contract which seems expeditious, particularly as he also put his name to the *Osimo Polyptych* (fig. 0.13) in 1464 made in collaboration with Antonio. The timescale compares reasonably to the eight months stipulated in the contract for the less complex *Dormition of the Virgin*.⁶⁵ As Diedo did not make a separate payment to a woodcarver for the polyptych's frame, it is probable Bartolomeo himself was responsible for the hiring of the frame-maker, as was the case in the 1484 contract.⁶⁶ Given the formal similarity of the frame to those of other Vivarini altarpieces, such as the 1450 Bologna *Certosa Polyptych*, Antonio's coeval *Pesaro Polyptych* (fig. 2.12; Vatican Museums) and his own 1474 *St Mark Triptych*, it appears that Bartolomeo hired a woodcarver, perhaps Lodovico da Forlì, who collaborated on a regular basis with the Vivarini shop over an extended period. Lodovico's name appears on one of the San Zaccaria polyptychs of 1443 (fig. 0.03), and documents prove that he was a neighbour and associate of the brothers.⁶⁷

The Iconography of the *Polyptych of the Madonna*

The iconography of the polyptych coincides closely with the names of Domenico's family members, providing further evidence that the work should be called 'the Diedo polyptych'.

Of course, the depiction of the onomastic saints more generally in altarpieces is well recognised, but there is room for further understanding of how *quattrocento* patrons chose the saints to be represented and what that choice signified (this topic will be developed in chapters 2 & 7). In an article on given names in Venice (1400-1559), Collange noted the increasing majority of children's names were chosen with Christian, usually hagiographic, associations. Although this was evident throughout Europe,

⁶³ For altarpiece covers see Nova in Borsook and Gioffredi (1994), pp. 177-89, especially p. 178, and Humfrey (1993), p. 51 and p. 312, n. 61.

⁶⁴ See introduction, and Favaro (1975), p. 27.

⁶⁵ Sambin (1964), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁶ Sambin (1964), p. 41; also appendices 8 and 9 here.

⁶⁷ See chapter 5 and appendix 8.

Venice was precocious in this tendency.⁶⁸ By selecting a saint's name for their newborn child, parents introduced it into the wider Christian community and also placed their child under the special protection of their homonymous saint.⁶⁹ It thus follows that by far the most popular girl's name of the period in Venice was Maria, reflecting the importance of the Virgin Mary as prime mediatrix; and in periods following outbreaks of plague, European children generally were more likely to be given the names of saints associated with protection from disease, such as Sebastiano or Antonio.⁷⁰

It is proposed that, analogously, namesake saints were the most important factor in the iconographic selections made by Bartolomeo's private commissioners. Just as the parents of a newborn child sought to place their offspring under the protection of a given saint, those preparing funerary chapels for themselves or their departed kin would adorn its altar with images of onomastic saints, implicitly appealing to them for intercession and relief of their souls' purgatorial travails; from cradle to beyond the grave, the individual was protected by his or her "own" saint. Thus, Domenico Diedo's altarpiece included an impressive depiction of his patron saint and, in the small panel above, the image of his wife Chiara's saint; any inscription on the couple's tomb, probably set into the floor before the altar, would have implicitly connected the couple with the images of their protector saints set above it.

Collange also interpreted the naming of male children as an act of commemoration of beloved deceased, as well as positive affirmation of the patrician line, specifically in the passing of a name through successive generations, likened to the inheritance of tangible patrimony.⁷¹ It is proposed that the hagiography of Diedo's altarpiece was similarly an affirmation of the past and the future of the patriline: the depiction of name-saints operated both as a memorial to the dead, where these recall the name of a deceased father or brother, and as an affirmation of future continuity, where these evoke names of the youngest generation. In this way, the depiction of name-saints was the visual articulation to what Chojnacki characterised as 'the fifteenth-century patriciate's avid

⁶⁸ 'Dès la fin du trezième siècle, le répertoire onomastique est formé à 90% de noms de saints. Selon l'auteur, cette situation est exceptionnelle et place Venice en position avant gardiste dans tout le cadre européen.' Collange (2000), p. 188, also p. 186.

⁶⁹ Collange (2000), p. 183.

⁷⁰ In the period 1400-49, 9.1% of girls in the author's survey were named Maria, and 13.4% in the period 1450-99. Collange (2000), p. 183. On the use of the names of saintly thaumaturges, *ibid.* p. 189.

⁷¹ Collange (2000), pp. 192-94.

attention to patrilineal descent, the operating principle of the class's hereditary exclusivism'.⁷²

Diedo's altarpiece duly included the onomastic saints of his late father Giovanni and recently-deceased brother Antonio (d. 1459). In the absence of Domenico's own progeny, the altarpiece also included the saints of his eldest nephew, Andrea (named an executor in Domenico's will), and Andrea's eldest son Piero, great-nephew to Domenico and young heir to the Diedo line (fig. 1.05). In the near future Piero would be officially initiated into public life as an adult patrician male, a moment of great import to the family.⁷³ Evidence suggests that uncle-nephew ties were often very significant, with names often passed from uncle to nephew, a phenomenon which Collange explains by reference to the social and economic importance of the Venetian *fraterna*;⁷⁴ the strength of the bond was expressed by another of Bartolomeo's commissioners, Piero Corner who, like Diedo, lacked direct heirs: 'all my nephews whom...I love equally as [though they were] my own, most dear sons' (chapter 3).⁷⁵

As Chojnacki has observed, familial bonds were not limited to the patriline, but also reached more informally across marital and maternal kinship networks.⁷⁶ Accordingly, although the male figures are the most prominent in his altarpiece, Domenico Diedo did not overlook his female kin in his selection of saints. As we have seen, St Clare, onomastic saint of both Domenico's wife and his only (surviving?) sister mentioned in his will, was represented in the small image above St Dominic. Adjacent to her was the Magdalene, name-saint of his maternal grandmother who must have been a significant figure in Domenico's childhood, especially following the early death of his mother.⁷⁷

⁷² Chojnacki, (2000), p. 206.

⁷³ 'M°ccccLxvi die xxv augusti Vir nobilis S[er] Andreas diedo q[uondam] S[er] ant[onio] p[rocurato]ris sc[r]ibi fecit nobilis juven[il]e S[er] petri eiu[s] filiu[s] ad ballotam aureata[m]...' Avogaria di Comun, reg. 164/III, 131r.

⁷⁴ Collange (2000), p. 193.

⁷⁵ 'mie nevodi i qual... amo eugualmente tuti come mie proprii et carissimi fioli', appendix 7.

⁷⁶ Chonjacki (2000), p. 207 ff.

⁷⁷ Fantina Darmano, daughter of *Magdalena* and Nicolo, and wife of a certain Giovanni Diedo (patronym omitted), made wills during pregnancies in 1386 and 1401. The second mentions her young son Antonio (name of Domenico's elder brother). It is likely the child Fantina was carrying in 1401 was Domenico himself, as he was eighteen years old when presented at the Balla d'Oro in 1419 where his late mother's name was recorded as 'Fantina'. Venice, ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1023, atti Passamonte no. 34, and b. 55/d, no. 17; Venice, ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Balla d'Oro, reg. 162/I, fol. 51r. Fantina must have died before 1408 when a marriage was registered between Domenico Deido's father Giovanni and 'la fia q. S. ___ Moresini (*sic*) [...] R[elic]ta. q. S. Nicolo Loredan'. This Morosini cannot have been the mother of the mother of Antonio and Domenico as affirmed by F. Rossi (1991), p. 761. (The Morosini bride's given name was retrospectively inserted in the marriage register, probably erroneously inferred

The remaining female saints depicted in the altarpiece were without known familial namesakes, but instead bore important local associations: the body of St Justina of Padua was preserved in the famous Paduan church dedicated to her, and the similarly-dedicated Venetian church would receive ten gold ducats from Diedo's legacy; a similar amount would go to the church of Sant'Elena where the body St Helen was preserved, situated on the eponymous Venetian island near the Certosa.

Without exception, the altarpieces commissioned by Bartolomeo's local private patrons exclude donor portraits as, of course, do most Venetian altarpieces of the period. This – like the selection of the floor tomb amongst the patrician class – may be interpreted as adherence to the Venetian decorum of modest self-presentation. Nevertheless, it is proposed here that in the case of private altarpieces, saints depicted could 'represent' the donors and their families almost as proxies, as well as divine advocates. Here, St Dominic is 'portrayed' with an individuality unusual in Bartolomeo's oeuvre (fig. 1.07), although it seems unlikely the saint was intended as an actual portrait likeness of the donor.

The operation of the iconography of the polyptych, as saintly roll-call of the donor and key figures in his patriline gathered around the Virgin, may be compared to Fra Angelico's famous *San Marco Altarpiece* (fig. 1.06; c. 1438-40, Museum of San Marco, Florence) which likewise excludes donor portraits. Commissioned, of course, by Cosimo de' Medici for the high altar of the Dominican convent of San Marco, the most prominent saints of that altarpiece are the donor's own namesake and familial patrons, the doctors Cosmas and Damian, who occupy conspicuous foreground positions in the attitude of kneeling donors. Amongst the other saints in the altarpiece are patron saints of Cosimo's father Giovanni (St John the Evangelist), his recently-deceased brother Lorenzo (St Lawrence), his eldest son Piero and nephew Pierfrancesco (Saints Peter Martyr and Francis). Of course, these and remaining saints in the *San Marco Altarpiece* also signified other affiliations: Saints Mark and Lorenzo were the *tituli* of the convent and the Medici's parish church respectively, and Saints Dominic and Peter Martyr represented the Dominican Order.⁷⁸

from a document pertaining to Giovanni's first wife, for Morosini's name is also given as 'Fantina', which was fairly unusual. Venice, ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Cronaca Matrimoni, reg. 107 / 2, fol. 103r.)

⁷⁸ On the familial and religious significance of the various saints in the *San Marco* altarpiece, see Hood (1993), p. 98.

Similarly, the programme of Diedo's altarpiece may also be related to the devotional interests of the religious community which accommodated it, perhaps reflecting the advice of Prior Francesco Trevisan. As Humfrey has emphasised, the possible influence of the incumbent clergy on altarpiece form and content, should not be overlooked.⁷⁹ Indeed, as noted above, when Trevisan was head of the Bologna charterhouse he may have commissioned the Vivarini brothers' 1450 polyptych for the high altar there (fig. 0.01), the iconography of which is similar in some respects to Diedo's polyptych.⁸⁰ In both works the central axis comprises the Virgin praying over the sleeping Infant, surmounted by a depiction of the dead Christ; John the Baptist and St Peter, together with the monastery *titulus* (Jerome in the case of the Bologna altarpiece), feature in side panels. It is clear from Diedo's account book that he was in frequent contact with 'Prior don Francesco', who visited his home on at least one occasion, and it will be seen that Prior Francesco was more directly involved in the initial building phase of the chapel than Diedo himself.⁸¹

Where the primary criterion for the selection of saints in the *Polyptych of the Madonna* was kinship ties, when presented with a choice of appropriate saintly namesakes, Domenico Diedo selected those closest to the devotional interests of the Carthusians. As we have seen, St Andrew was the patron saint of Diedo's eldest nephews; but he was also the familiar titular of the Venice Certosa itself (which was also dedicated to St Bruno, founder of the Carthusian Order). The dedication of the monastery to St Andrew had been inherited from the foregoing Augustinian foundation and was retained throughout its history.⁸² Amongst its relics, the monastery possessed a portion of bone supposedly from the Saint's body as well as a fragment of his cross.⁸³ Indeed, Saints Andrew and Peter would both reappear in the altarpiece commissioned perhaps by Antonio Suriano for the high altar at the Certosa, *The Calling of the Sons of Zebedee* (Marco Basaiti, 1510, Accademia, Venice).⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Humfrey (1994), p. 15.

⁸⁰ As suggested by Humfrey (1993), p. 163.

⁸¹ '...di 17 mazo [1463] p[er] chassa f[ur]ono [con]tadi a mis. ell prior in chaxa n[ost]ra duc. 60 doro...', appendix 5.

⁸² When the church was re-consecrated in 1721 after major rebuilding works 'fu solennemente dedicata, sotto l'invocazione del primo suo Titolare Sant'Andrea Apostolo.' F. Corner (1758), p. 63.

⁸³ F. Corner (1758), p. 63.

⁸⁴ The Basaiti altarpiece is sometimes misnamed after Boschini called it the *Calling of Peter and Andrew* Boschini (1664), p. 557. See McAndrew (1969), p. 22, n. 29 and Ottieri (1984) pp. 80-81 on the subject of the painting.

In the polyptych, the figure of St Andrew is iconographically similar to that which would appear in Bartolomeo's *Bragora Altarpiece* (fig. 5.17; 1478 *in situ*, Venice, chapter 5) and the 1482 *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01). In each case the apostle is depicted as an old man with grey-white hair and long bifurcated beard and he bears a Latin cross with short cross-beam.⁸⁵ In comparison with this gaunt apostle in the Diedo polyptych, later versions of the saint demonstrate Bartolomeo's stylistic evolution toward more substantial, rounded forms.

But the more ascetic appearance of the Certosa St Andrew may also be explained with reference to the disciplined lifestyle practiced by the Carthusian Order. Despite the liberal employment of gold and the decorative qualities of the polyptych's frame, the figures in the altarpiece seem austere. The flanking saints are portrayed with ascetic tautness, their robes are exceptionally plain and there is no exuberant incidental decoration as found in Bartolomeo's next major independent work, the *Naples Altarpiece* (fig. 7.13), or the 1474 *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01). The only luxurious objects are the richly bound volumes clasped by Saints Andrew, Peter and Dominic – this is also consonant with the Carthusian lifestyle, where the brothers were regularly employed in the creation of handsome manuscripts.

Three of the saints depicted in the polyptych – the Baptist, the Magdalene and Anthony Abbot – exemplified the eremitic or penitent life. St Anthony Abbot may have been selected over St Anthony of Padua as the onomastic saint of Domenico Diedo's brother because of his exemplary eremitic existence in the wilderness and his reputation as the father of monasticism. And John the Baptist, patron of ascetics, may have likewise been selected over the eponymous apostle because of Carthusian devotion to the Baptist, whose significance to them was similar to that of St Bruno their founder.⁸⁶ The

Antonio Suriano was by 1510 a former Prior of the Venice Certosa, turned Patriarch; in 1484, when still vice prior of the Padua Certosa, he commissioned Bartolomeo's *Dormition of the Virgin*. See above.

⁸⁵ This was still the usual form of iconography for St Andrew in the Veneto. See for example Bissolo's *St Andrew Triptych* (1515, S. Giovanni in Bragora, Venice). According to Réau there is no historical basis for the X-shaped St. Andrew's cross, adopted as the standard iconography at a relatively late date. Réau (1957), III, p. 76 ff. See also Kaftal (1978), no. 16, col. 36.

⁸⁶ Réau (1957) II, p. 436, lists important Carthusian commissions featuring the Baptist: Claus Sluter's *John the Baptist* on the portal of the Chartreuse de Dijon; a fresco cycle of the life of the Baptist appears in the chapel at the Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction at Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, which was dedicated to the Baptist; a cycle of the Baptist by Fernando Gallegos was painted for the Charterhouse (Cartuja) de Miraflores.

portrayal of the Baptist in the polyptych (fig. 1.08) stresses the austerity of his hermetic existence, almost emaciated, he is dressed in the camel-hair garment, and stands in a barren, rocky landscape with the tiny cave behind him which served as his dwelling.⁸⁷ In this figure Bartolomeo's debt to Donatello is quite apparent, for the stance of the Baptist in the polyptych is almost identical to that of Donatello's *John the Baptist* (fig. 1.09; 1438, Frari, Venice) sculpted for the altar of the Florentine *scuola* at the Frari. The Baptist also appears in the lower order of the Bologna *Certosa Polyptych*, as a pair with St Jerome, *titulus* of the Bologna charterhouse, set either side of the Virgin; here Jerome is depicted as hermit rather than Cardinal, his Cardinal's hat set on the ground.⁸⁸ The Baptist in the Venice polyptych may also be considered an allusion to the sacrament of Baptism, with carved figures of Joshua and Noah set above him prefiguring references to the redemptive sacrament.⁸⁹

As may be expected in an altarpiece programme, Christological and eucharistic themes may also be perceived in the *Polyptych of the Madonna*. In this reading, the figure of Isaiah may allude to the incarnation, while John the Baptist may be taken as harbinger of the Crucifixion, his banderol inscribed '[ec]ce agn[u]s dei' as he gestures toward the carved Crucifixion. The infant sleeps on his mother's lap (fig. 1.10) in a prefiguration of death, emphasised by the cadaverous pallor and rigidity of his flesh, and his proximity to the Crucifix. The throne, like others in Bartolomeo's Marian altarpieces, resembles a stone altar, as if to emphasise a eucharistic theme. The central image of the sleeping child watched over by his adoring mother is comparable with Cosmé Tura's contemporary *Virgin and Child* (early 1460s, Accademia, Venice), where the inscription explicitly links the salvation of the donor's soul with an unmistakably eucharistic iconography.⁹⁰ Finally, the figures of Noah, Jonah and Joshua on the frame of the polyptych prefigure the resurrection or, more generally, the notion of salvation

⁸⁷ John the Baptist could be the onomastic saint of individuals named Giovanni or Giovanna, see D. Herlily (1995), pp. 351-52. Réau (1957) II, p. 437, believed the widespread adoption of the name 'Jean' and all its variations throughout Europe was related to the popularity of the Baptist.

⁸⁸ As observed by Humfrey (1993), p. 163.

⁸⁹ Joshua's safe passage through the river Jordan was believed to prefigure the Baptism of Christ and Christian baptism in general. The Flood represented the purification of a corrupt world, analogous to the purification of baptism; the ark was a metaphor of the church (St Peter's ship of salvation), guiding souls in perdition to the harbour of grace. Réau (1957) II, p. 105 and p. 219.

⁹⁰ SVIGLIA EL TUO FIGLIO DOLCE MADRE PIA / PER FAR FIN FELICE L'ALMA MIA, cited Nepi Sciré and Valcanover (1985), p. 178.

through the Christian church – a suitably hopeful resolution in the context of a funerary chapel.⁹¹

The choice of the Virgin as the *titulus* of the chapel may reflect the importance of the Marian cult within the Carthusian Order. Saint Bruno emphasised the figure of Mary, exhorting the brothers to meditate on her life, scenes from which were frequently the subject of *quattrocento* Carthusian commissions.⁹² We do not know what all the *tituli* of the other altars in the Certosa were at this date, but it is possible Diedo's polyptych filled a *lacuna* in respect of an altar to the Virgin. Diedo referred to his chapel as the 'Chapel named [after] Saint Mary', without specifying a Marian feast.⁹³ Of course, iconic images of the Virgin were the mainstay of Venetian lay devotion and Diedo, like his contemporaries, supplicated the Virgin in his home before a Greek-style icon bearing her image (see below). It was therefore only natural that he should direct his artist to produce a more splendid iconic Virgin for his altarpiece, to be the focus for representations on behalf of his soul, once separated from his body and released from 'this miserable life'.⁹⁴

The Virgin and sleeping child were also the focal point of the Vivarini brothers' Bologna *Certosa Polyptych* of 1450 (fig. 0.01), but the Madonna in the Diedo polyptych, over-scaled and marmoreal, is more impressive. By contrast to her Venetian counterpart, the face of the Bologna Virgin, almost certainly executed by Antonio, seems pinched and the head disproportionately bulbous. The comparison serves to illustrate Bartolomeo's technical achievements as an independent master, where in the best works, he employed paradox to heighten visual sensation and meaning. The Virgin is described by the painter as approachable mediatrix, as well as the aloof, monumental Mater Dei and her body and drapery are evidently artificial but hyper-naturalistic. Such effects are gained through heightened colour saturation, *trompe l'oeil* sculptural modelling and a marmoreally smooth painted surface, achieved through prodigious handling of the tempera medium.

⁹¹ Réau (1957) II, p. 412.

⁹² Zanibon (1998), p. 30, n. 8; See also Bolton (1996), p. 895.

⁹³ 'Chapella nominada Santa Maria', appendix 5.

⁹⁴ 'questa miser vitta', appendix 4.

The Commercial Association of Commissioner and Artist

Presumably constructed according to Diedo's conservative taste, the *Polyptych of the Madonna* is a formally traditional work and did not anticipate the precocious unified *pala* which Bartolomeo made the following year, the *Naples Altarpiece*. For all his wealth and high status, Diedo was not apparently an habitual artistic patron, as the only painting listed in sale inventories compiled after his death was 'a Greek-style *ancona*', likely to have been a small icon of the Madonna used for private devotion and purchased 'off-the-peg'.⁹⁵ Diedo's known painting acquisitions thus reveal him not so much an early 'art collector', but rather a pious man for whom paintings were functional objects for devotion, whilst surviving documents demonstrate his prudent and methodical character. And Diedo was apparently uninterested in the burgeoning humanist debate now engaging many of his peers; Margaret King does not record him in her survey of Venetian humanists, and literary works did not feature in either his will or inventories.⁹⁶ It therefore appears reasonable to hypothesise that Diedo preferred a traditional altarpiece to a conspicuously novel object, and it is an indication of Bartolomeo's canny versatility that he produced altarpieces which satisfied the varying tastes of his clientele.

But what drew Diedo to select Bartolomeo Vivarini for the production of this most significant object? Firstly, although he had no major independent works to his name, Bartolomeo was established as the long-serving junior partner of the familiar Vivarini 'brand', some fourteen years having passed since he signed the Bologna *Certosa Polyptych* with Antonio; his skills were advertised by the distinctive Vivarini trademark appearing on numerous altarpieces found in prestigious locations in the city and abroad, works which were articulated in the conservative format Diedo apparently favoured.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that social networks were also significant in Diedo's choice of artist. For Domenico Diedo and Bartolomeo were almost certainly acquainted as fellow *confratelli* of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and it will be seen that the Diedo altarpiece was the first of several important commissions Bartolomeo gained through contacts at the *scuola*. Further, Diedo may have taken advice or reassurance from Certosa Prior Francesco Trevisan when selecting his artist; as noted above, Trevisan perhaps commissioned Antonio and Bartolomeo to make the Bologna *Certosa*

⁹⁵ 'una Ancona ala grega', ASV, Procuratori di S. Marco de Citra, b. 134, DI, no. 2, 3r.

⁹⁶ M. King (1986).

Polyptych;⁹⁷ it is perhaps an indication of Bartolomeo's continuing good rapport with Trevisan that his nephew Lorenzo (son of the late Giovanni d'Alemagna) was recorded a novice at the Venice Certosa in 1466. Griffiths has suggested that the novitiate came about as a result of the altarpiece commission.⁹⁸

The agreed fee of twenty-four gold ducats for the *Polyptych of the Madonna* does not seem a handsome sum, given that Bartolomeo probably had to provide materials and reimburse the frame-maker from this cash. It is difficult to compare the contract price meaningfully with fees paid to other artists due to the effects of inflation and disparities in products commissioned. For instance, Bartolomeo's fee of twenty-four ducats should not be compared with the impressive sum of two hundred ducats paid to Antonio Vivarini in 1456 for the *pala* of the high altar of the Carità, as it seems that the latter was a much larger and more complex mixed-media object.⁹⁹ But the figure might more usefully be compared to the fifty-two gold ducats received per annum by a master craftsman employed in the Venice building trade in 1468.¹⁰⁰ Of course, Bartolomeo would have supplemented his in-year income with the sale of other products including "minor" works as well as his contribution to the *Osimo Polyptych*, coeval with the Diedo polyptych.

Diedo was shrewd in his financial affairs and may have driven a hard bargain in his dealings with the artist; in his testament he informed his commissioners that his books were in order, and exhorted them to invest his cash in the 'camera' at three percent and not leave it lying around 'in sacco'.¹⁰¹ But it may also be appropriate to see the *Polyptych of the Madonna* as a sort of loss-leader on the part of an artist keen to establish his own place in the market. Notwithstanding the exclusive location of the chapel of the Madonna, this commercial tactic seems to have functioned well, for after 1464 Bartolomeo made no further works in collaboration with Antonio. The contract with Procurator Diedo may well have commended Bartolomeo to the Scuola Grande di San Marco, for which he would soon be commissioned to paint the Abraham narratives, as well as the Certosa near Padua. In 1475 Bartolomeo completed the so-called

⁹⁷ As suggested by Humfrey (1993), p. 163.

⁹⁸ Griffiths (1976), p. 10, and P. Paoletti (1929), p. 87, n. 1; also, appendix 1 here.

⁹⁹ See Fogolari (1924), p. 77 ff and Griffiths (1976), p. 10. There is no positive evidence for Bartolomeo's contribution apart from his habitual collaboration with Antonio in the 1450s.

¹⁰⁰ Mueller (1997), p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Appendix 4.

Lussingrande Altarpiece for the Padua Certosa, and nine years later he would be contracted to produce its pendant, the *Dormition of the Virgin* (figs. 0.14 and 8.01). The surviving contract for the latter, made with Vice-Prior Antonio Suriano (future Patriarch of Venice) and the other monks, shows that Bartolomeo was paid fifty gold ducats — more than double the fee for the early Diedo commission.¹⁰² The rise in contract price may be explained not only by inflation, but also the artist's success over the intervening years, spanning much of his independent career.

§

As the first major, independent altarpiece by Bartolomeo, the *Polyptych of the Madonna* was no fumbling beginner's piece, but rather an accomplished, mature work of exceptional quality. Although the prudent and conservative commissioner may have proscribed the renaissance format and ornament which the artist enthusiastically adopted elsewhere, here Bartolomeo's strong artistic personality emerged for the first time. The artist was now unhampered by the concern for stylistic synthesis necessary in the collaborative projects he made with his brother; indeed, the *Polyptych of the Madonna* is more successful formally than the brothers' coeval *Osimo Polyptych*, where the hands of the brothers (and assistants?) are poorly integrated.

In truth, the assured handling of the Diedo polyptych was not always equalled in Bartolomeo's later works, most notably those made for export largely by the studio. But the polyptych appears to be entirely autograph — indeed it is unlikely that Bartolomeo was yet in a position to employ significant workshop assistance. That said, Alvise Vivarini may have already commenced his apprenticeship with his uncle, for Alvise was so deeply impressed by the *Polyptych of the Madonna*, that it extensively informed his first independent work, the *Montefiorentino Polyptych* of 1476 (fig. 1.11).

¹⁰² Suriano was later appointed as Prior of the Venice Certosa. He may have commissioned Basaiti to produce its high altar after he had become patriarch of Venice. See Ottieri (1984). On the 'Lussingrande' and 'Dormition of the Virgin' altarpieces see Sambin (1964); the Paduan contract published by Sambin is reproduced at appendix 9 and discussed in the concluding chapter of this study.

Domenico Dolfín and the *St Augustine Polyptych* (1473)

*‘voglio et ordino che renduta sara l’ anima al onnipotente, el corpo mio sia
sepelido in la giesia di S. Zuanepolo al altar di S. Agostino’*¹

According to Ridolfi the *St Augustine Polyptych* was ‘reputed the best’ of Bartolomeo’s works ‘which the artist handled rather better than the others’.² The magnificent work, now sadly much reduced (fig. 2.01), was prestigiously located in the important Dominican church of SS Giovanni e Paolo, where it graced the first altar on the left (figs. 2.02-2.04). Articulated in the traditional polyptych form, it originally comprised ten painted panels arranged over three orders, encased in a beautifully wrought frame. By the seventeenth century the frame had been ‘modernised’, and in the early nineteenth century, as an indirect consequence of the post-Napoleonic disruptions, the altarpiece was removed from its altar, dismantled, and the frame was presumably destroyed. Only three panels remain in the church – these depict the *titulus* of the altar St Augustine enthroned (191 x 69 cm), as well as St Lawrence (158 x 55 cm) and St Dominic (159 x 56 cm). The St Augustine panel bears the inscription: BARTHOLOMEVS . VIVARINVS. DE . MVRIANO . PINXIT . MCCCCIXXIII. (*sic*). A further two panel fragments in museums may perhaps be identified as the missing Virgin and Child and St Mark from the altarpiece. No trace remains of the St John the Baptist and four *tondi* depicting half-figures of saints which formed the top register.

It has recently been shown that the St Augustine altar was founded in compensation for the diversion of wealthy nobleman Marco Dolfín’s (d. c. 1375) testamentary fund towards the cost of the ambitious reconstruction of SS Giovanni e Paolo, and it was assumed the resident Dominican friars had commissioned the polyptych.³ However,

¹ Will of Domenico q. Dolfín Dolfín. The abridged testament is reproduced in appendix 6.

² ‘...ripudata la migliore [di Bartolomeo], è quella della chiesa de’ santi Giovanni e Paolo posta nel primo altare dentro la porta maggiore a mano manca, ove nello spazio di mezzo è santo agostino sedente...nella quale Bartolomeo si diportò vantaggiosamente bene dall’altre, ed è stimata delle migliori sue operazioni...’ Ridolfi (1999), p. 55.

³ Humfrey (1993), p. 344, cat. 16.

this chapter proposes that the *de facto* commissioner of the altarpiece was a later member of the Dolfín family, Domenico q. Dolfín Dolfín (*sic*), who was acquainted with the artist, enjoyed unusually close ties with the church and, in later life, would appropriate the altar as a funerary chapel for himself and his illegitimate sons. The iconography and form of the polyptych will be considered as a reflection of the civic and familial ties of Domenico Dolfín, as well as Dominican theological precepts.

The Original Context and Form of the *St Augustine Polyptych*

The earliest record of the St Augustine altar at SS Giovanni e Paolo is indeed found in Domenico Dolfín's 1494 testament: '...I will and order that my soul be rendered to the Almighty and that my body be buried in the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo at the altar of St Augustine, [found] inside the doorway to the left side. It is the one which has the two crests of the House of Dolfín...'.⁴ The family crests mentioned by Dolfín remain *in situ* (late fourteenth century?), each with three gold dolphins on a dark blue background, carved in stone and placed high on the wall; the crests demarcate the width of the first bay of the basilica.⁵ Three marble tomb-slabs are set into the ground before the altar, one of which (fig. 2.05) is inscribed:

DOMINICO . DELPHINO . Q .
D [OMI] NI . DELPHINI
ET . IOANI . EIUS . FILIO
ACFR [ATR] I SIBI . Q . ET . HERE
DIBUS . MARCUS . FR [ATER]
M D XXXIX
DIE XX SETEMBRIS⁶

Domenico himself died in early 1515 (1514 m.v.), while the 1539 inscription on his tomb presumably relates to the burial of his son Zuane (Giovanni) in the same tomb.⁷

⁴ '...in la giesia di S. Zuanepolo al altar di S. Agustino, dentro dalla porta a banda senestra, che e quel ha le do arme da cha Dolphin...', appendix 6.

⁵ Date of Dolfín crests as found in Sponza and Manno (1995), p. 10. As the dating of minor Venetian sculpture is often problematic, it is likely their dating is dependent on the date of the Maggior Consiglio ruling referred to below.

It is suggested below that the last bay to be completed was effectively funded by Marco Dolfín and the arms were so positioned in recognition of his contribution. See also references to the 1393 Maggior Consiglio ruling which stipulated the Dolfín arms be placed at the altar for posterity.

⁶ 'To the late Domenico Dolfín q. Ser Dolfín and Giovanni his son and late brother to him [Marco] and [their] heirs, brother Marco / 20 September 1539.'

⁷ Zuane, Zuan, Zuanne are variants of Giovanni in the Venetian dialect.

The present marble altar (fig. 2.04), according to Moschini, replaced the original wooden altar *mensa* (lost) in the early nineteenth century: 'For the wooden altar, which had the above-noted painting [the *St Augustine Polyptych*], was substituted this other one, of noble design, elegant forms and [made of] precious marbles... [which] formerly graced the church of the Servite fathers.'⁸ Although ecclesiastical legislation prescribed the altar *mensa* be made of stone, wooden altars were still quite usual in fifteenth-century Venice.⁹ The ensemble at the altar of St Augustine would have been more dimly illuminated than today, for lancets in the opposite wall had not yet been opened.¹⁰

In 1581 Francesco Sansovino noted Bartolomeo's splendid altarpiece on the altar of St Augustine: 'Thus entering the church through the main door, on the left one sees the Altarpiece of St Augustine, done in tempera by Luigi (*sic*) Vivarini'.¹¹ Ridolfi also saw it 'on the first altar when entering via the main portal, on the left-hand side', and confirmed that the lower of the two principal orders comprised St Augustine flanked by Saints Mark and John the Baptist, and that in the upper register was the Virgin and Child with Saints Dominic and Lawrence (although Ridolfi erroneously identified the latter as Vincent).¹² Although Ridolfi overlooked the minor panels at the top of the work, Boschini, noted four saints in *tondi* on the upper register and correctly identified St Lawrence.¹³

The precise subjects of the four minor panels in the top register remain unknown. On the basis of what is suggested below about the identity of the larger panels, it seems

⁸ 'All'altare di legno, che avevavi con la tavola or ora accennata fu sostituito quest' altro [altare], nobile della invenzione, elegante delle sagome, prezioso pei marmi...ornava già la chiesa de' pp. Serviti, onde fu trasportato...'. Moschini (1815), vol I, pp. 170-71.

⁹ On the persistence of wooden altars in Venice, see Humfrey (1993), p. 50. For the rule regarding stone altars, J. Gardner (1994), p. 10.

¹⁰ According to Humfrey (1993), p. 53, only the *oculi* in the south wall were present in the fifteenth century.

¹¹ 'Entrando adunque in Chiesa per la porta maestra dalla sinistra, si vede la Palla di S. Agostino fatta à guazzo da Luigi Viuarino'. Francesco Sansovino (1998), p. 65.

¹² '...riputata la migliore [di Bartolomeo], è quella della chiesa de' santi Giovanni e Paolo posta nel primo altare dentro la porta maggiore a mano manca, ove nello spazio di mezzo è santo Agostino sedente, dalle parti san Marco e san Giovan Battista, e di sopra la Vergine e li santi Domenico e Vincenzo (*sic*), nella quale Bartolomeo si diportò vantaggiosamente bene dall'altre, ed è stimata delle migliori sue operazioni, che fu recinta ancora con bell'ornamento di colonne dorate inserite di vaghi lavori, or rimodernato.' Ridolfi (1999), p. 55.

¹³ '...compartito in dieci vani: nella cima vi sono quattro tavole di figura circolare, con quattro Santi; e più a basso vi son sei altri compartimenti in due ordini: nel primo è la beata Vergine con il Bambino in braccio e dalle parti li Santi Domenico e Lorenzo: nel altro ordine vi è nel mezzo S. Agostino vescovo e dalle parti li Santi Marco evangelista e Giovanni Battista'. Boschini (1674), p. 216.

likely these minor figures were saints or *beati* revered by the Dominicans, such as Catherine of Siena and Peter Martyr, or name-saints of members of the Dolfin family. The discrepancy in the panels' recorded shape – described as 'tondi' (Boschini) or 'oval' (Moschini) – could be explained by their having been cut into an oval shape at a late date, as occurred with four panels from the *Alazano Sopra Polyptych*.¹⁴ Indeed Ridolfi, who alone described the altarpiece frame, noted it had already been the subject of intervention: '...it was framed with a beautiful ornamentation of gilded columns with graciously worked inserts, which has now been modernised.'¹⁵ From the contours of the gilded surfaces of the surviving panels, it is evident that the frame was articulated in the gothic style, with the saints enclosed in niches topped by cusped gothic arches. Ridolfi's reference to gilded pilasters decorated with 'worked inserts' suggests the vertical members of the frame were decorated with the sort of elaborate tracery employed in the *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01) made the following year. It also seems likely that the predella of the *St Augustine Polyptych* would have been decorated with abstract tracery, as was the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* and the *St Mark Triptych*. Had the *St Augustine Polyptych* included any historiated predella panels, these would surely have been mentioned in one of the old sources and, in any case, would be uncharacteristic of a Vivarini altarpiece.

As noted in chapter 1, it is likely that the frame of the *St Augustine Polyptych* was made by the same carver or workshop (perhaps Lodovico da Forlì) as the frames of the brothers' Bologna *Certosa Polyptych* of 1450 (fig. 0.01), the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* (fig. 1.02), Antonio's *Pesaro Polyptych* of the same year (fig. 2.12; Vatican Museums), the *St Mark Triptych* and others, which share similar motifs and style. Each of these elaborate gothic frames was crowned with pinnacles formed of Old Testament prophets identified with banderols, with a central carved figure or group forming an apex to the altarpiece (appendix 8). Any central pinnacle of the *St Augustine Polyptych* could have comprised a eucharistic motif, such as a Crucifixion, as in the 1464 polyptych, or a Man of Sorrows, a subject which frequently appeared in painted panels above the Virgin and Child in contemporary altarpieces, including Bartolomeo's *Bari*, *Bragora* and *Ca' Bernardo* altarpieces.

¹⁴ For the *Alzano Sopra Polyptych*, see F. Rossi (1994), p. 135, cat. 24.

¹⁵ '...fù recinta ancora con bell'ornament di colonne dorate inserite di vaghi lavori hor rimodernato...' Ridolfi (1999), p. 55.

The pinnacles would have emphasised the extraordinary height of the three-register altarpiece, of which both principal registers unusually comprised full-length saints – Griffiths calculated the imposing structure stood over five metres tall.¹⁶ As the St Augustine panel (from the lowest register) is longer by some thirty centimetres than the St Lawrence and Dominic panels (from the middle register), it is possible the orders of the polyptych were graduated in height from bottom to top. Alternatively, the panel depicting St Augustine may have been taller than the St Mark and Baptist which flanked it, an arrangement which would have rendered the figure of Augustine more imposing; any height discrepancy in the panels of the first register would have been resolved by the insertion of decorative carving above the St Mark and Baptist panels in the form of lunettes or spandrels, as seen above the side panels of the Bologna *Certosa Polyptych*. The traditional gold background and the elaborate gilded frame must have enhanced the rich splendour of the altarpiece, set as it was against a vast expanse of wall finished with a plain design of fictive brick.

The polyptych further exemplifies how Bartolomeo, when working for the domestic market, exercised great sensitivity in devising formats to suit the dimensions and characteristics of the ecclesiastical space for which his altarpieces were destined. The interior of the Dominican church must have been particularly familiar to Bartolomeo, as he lived in the nearby parish of Santa Maria Formosa and was enrolled in the Scuola Grande di San Marco (fig. 2.11) which was closely allied to SS Giovanni e Paolo. He lent the *St Augustine Polyptych* the proportions of a high altarpiece, mindful of the great height of the vault and the space of the nave. The *St Augustine Polyptych* was probably the tallest altarpiece Bartolomeo made for the domestic market – his other Venetian altarpieces were made for private chapels spatially separated from the main ecclesiastical vessel, generally with proportionately lower vaults, to which Bartolomeo accordingly scaled his altarpieces.

When Moschini saw the polyptych in 1815 it was still complete, though in poor condition with ‘Saints Mark and John the Baptist...almost lost’; the polyptych now occupied the altar of St Peter Martyr, recently vacated by Titian’s famous masterpiece which had been despatched to the Louvre.¹⁷ Shortly after the return of the *St Peter*

¹⁶ Griffiths (1976), p. 13.

¹⁷ ‘negli ultimi tre comparti vi sono lateralmente i santi Marco e Giambattista, due figure quasi perdute, e nel mezzo santo Agostino seduto’. Moschini (1815), I, p. 170.

Martyr in 1817, the polyptych was broken up; in 1822 Soràvia recorded the surviving panels depicting Saints Augustine, Lawrence and Dominic, of which the Lawrence and Dominic were by then found in the sacristy.¹⁸

It is probable the damaged panels of Saints Mark, John the Baptist, and perhaps the Virgin and Child were disposed of by sale, later re-appearing on the art market as fragments. A panel fragment in Berlin, rightly attributed to Bartolomeo, is possibly identifiable with the missing St Mark (fig. 2.06; 53 x 35 cm (cut down), cat. III.124, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin).¹⁹ The panel passed to the Berlin Museums as part of the Solly collection in 1821; a number of works in that collection came from churches in Northern Italy.²⁰ The saint lacks any attribute apart from an open book, but is convincingly identified as Mark, the physiognomy being very similar to the eponymous saint of Bartolomeo's 1474 triptych at the Frari. The style and high quality of the Berlin panel are compatible with the surviving panels of the *St Augustine Polyptych*, whilst the physiognomy is close to that of Augustine, and the drawing is consonant with the surviving Lawrence and Dominic. Further, the handling suggests a date in the early 1470s; hair, for example, is depicted naturalistically of fine strands, and the sleeve is rendered crisply but delicately (whereas from the later 1470s Bartolomeo would increasingly render drapery, hair and even musculature with more abstracted forms). The Berlin panel has been cut down on all sides, and is now about 20 cm narrower than the St Dominic and St Lawrence panels; it has not been possible to verify the tooling pattern on the halo but the cusped contour of the gold ground of the panel top resembles that of the surviving panels of Saints Dominic and Lawrence.²¹

Zeri's tentative identification of a different panel (fig. 2.07; 47.3 x 37.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York) with the missing St Mark from the *St Augustine Polyptych* is problematic on stylistic grounds. Like the Berlin panel, the New York panel almost certainly originated in a polyptych and there are good reasons to believe it represents St Mark; it has also been cut down on all sides, and again the physiognomy is similar to the St Mark of the Frari triptych. Significantly, the tooling on the Saint's halo

¹⁸ Soràvia (1822), I, pp. 49-51.

¹⁹ Catalogued as 'Ein lesender Heiliger' in *Gemäldegalerie Berlin: Gesamtverzeichnis*, Berlin (1996), p. 127. The figure is catalogued by Pallucchini as *St Mark*, although no association is made with the *St Augustine Polyptych* Pallucchini (1962), pp. 123-24, cat. 179.

²⁰ Solly amassed his Italian collection through agents in North Italy who acquired works from private individuals as well as ecclesiastical institutions. Dietl (1993), particularly p. 52.

²¹ Note this outline is barely perceptible in Pallucchini's catalogue (1962), cat. 179.

matches that on the St Lawrence and St Dominic panels of the *St Augustine Polyptych*, although this pattern was used by the master on more than one occasion.²² Whilst the attribution to Bartolomeo is beyond question, the style recalls works by the master and his studio from the 1480s, which are characterised by a move away from naturalism toward boldly drawn outlines, a broad, flattened facial type with heavy lids over bulbous eyes, accentuated brows and lined forehead, plastically stylised hair and slightly abstracted, bold treatment of fabric folds.

No panel has been identified as the missing John the Baptist, although some idea as to the appearance of this panel may be gained from contemporary images of the Saint depicted by Bartolomeo. The depictions of the Baptist closest in date to the *St Augustine Polyptych* are found in the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* and that of the *St Mark Triptych* of a decade later. The figure for the *St Augustine Polyptych* presumably mediated the diverse treatment of the Baptist in those altarpieces (see chapter 3).

A *Virgin and Child* in the Correr Museum in Venice (fig. 2.08; inv. cl. I 1475, 76.5 x 52.5 cm) could perhaps be identified as the missing central panel from the second register of the *St Augustine Polyptych*. Although early descriptions of the altarpiece do no more than record the subject: ‘the Blessed Virgin with the Babe in arms’,²³ certain suppositions may be made about the appearance of that panel: as the flanking Saints Dominic and Lawrence were depicted full-length, it is likely that the Virgin was shown full-length and enthroned, as in intact Bartolomeo Vivarini polyptychs where the Virgin is depicted alongside full-length standing saints. Visual evidence indicates that in its original form the Correr panel indeed depicted a full-length Virgin and Child enthroned; although it has been categorised as one of Bartolomeo’s half-length Madonnas made for the domestic market, in his true half-length Madonnas the Virgin invariably stands behind a fictive ledge on which the Child may be supported (figs. 0.22-0.26). By contrast, the Correr panel is not framed by a parapet and the Virgin is depicted enthroned – a type which the artist did not employ in half-length Madonnas. The description of the throne as made of wood, rather than marble, is unusual in

²² Zeri (1973), p. 93. For example, the tooling pattern is also found on a *Madonna and Child* (50 x 41 cm) of the Kress Collection, Seattle Art Museum, Washington, Shapley (1966), p. 32, cat. K200. It is unlikely the latter came from the *St Augustine Polyptych* as it appears to be of a later date and also follows the form of half-length Madonnas Bartolomeo employed in upper tiers of polyptychs. It is possible that the Kress and Metropolitan panels came from the same polyptych.

²³ The Virgin and Child panel in the *St Augustine Polyptych* was described by Boschini as: ‘...la beata Vergine con il Bambino in braccio...’. Boschini, (1674), p. 216.

Bartolomeo's oeuvre, and is consonant with the depiction of the throne of St Augustine in the polyptych, also made of wood.

The Correr *Virgin and Child* is entirely consistent with monumental enthroned Madonnas found in Bartolomeo's altarpieces: the Virgin's pose, and the way she supports the child on her right knee, is almost replicated in Bartolomeo's 1476 *Bari Altarpiece* (fig. 0.15). The lack of inscription on as fine a panel as the Correr *Virgin and Child* would be remarkable in a supposedly autonomous work by this artist, and its absence also indicates the panel has been truncated or formed part of a larger complex. Although the Correr panel is some seventeen centimetres narrower than the St Augustine panel above which it was set, this can be explained by its having been cut down on all sides, evidenced by the lack of unpainted gesso margin and the extension of the gold ground across the entire width of the panel.²⁴ Whilst Bartolomeo's half-length 'domestic' Madonnas were invariably rectangular, the Correr panel's present form, with arched top, indicates its origin in a polyptych niche and its having been trimmed to just within its boundary of gold ground. Conservators have reported that the panel underwent drastic interventions in the nineteenth century including retouching of extensive *lacunae*; the poor state of the panel was no doubt the motive for its disposal by the church along with the St Mark and the Baptist.²⁵ The date of the panel (c. 1470), its Venetian provenance, and the superb quality of execution are consistent with the polyptych.²⁶ The tooling on the halo of the Virgin is more elaborate than those of Saints Lawrence and Dominic, but its outer border is similar in design.

The Circumstances of the Commission

The exceptional circumstances of the funding of the altarpiece demonstrates complicity between the Dominican orders, the State Procurators in their capacity as executors of a private estate, and the State itself, in over-riding the pious testamentary bequest of a

²⁴ Dorigato notes that the support comprised three planks, the one to the left is very narrow at only 10 cms; the support was reduced in thickness by being sliced vertically. My thanks are due to the late Sandro Sponza who kindly viewed and discussed the *Virgin and Child* and the SS Giovanni e Paolo panels with me. As he noted, it is likely the St Augustine panel was also reduced at its sides, as the painted surface extends across the width of the lower section of this panel which has no unpainted gesso margin.

²⁵ G. Mariacher (1957), pp. 237-38. Because of drastic nineteenth-century interventions, recent x-ray photographs of the panel revealed little. Dorigato (1993), pp. 64-65; pp. 157-61; pp. 227-29 and *idem*. (2000), p. 87.

²⁶ The Venetian provenance of the Correr *Madonna and Child* dates to 1901, when the Correr museum received it as part of the bequest of antique dealer Vincenzo Favenza. There is no information about the earlier provenance of the work. Romualdi (1901), p. 294 and Dorigato (2000), p. 87.

private individual for the benefit of the greater good. In this case, the rebuilding of the Dominican basilica must have been considered to the benefit and honour of the whole city, and the diversion of funds was justified by the ostensible need to avoid social tension.²⁷

Humfrey has shown that the altar of St Augustine was founded in compensation for the diversion of the testamentary funds of Marco 'Trivella' Dolfín, a wealthy Venetian patrician whose direct line was extinguished on the death of his son Andriol (fig. 2.09).²⁸ In his will of 1356, Marco Dolfín instructed his executors, the Procuratori de Citra, to oversee the establishment of a small Dominican monastic house on the island of Murano to be dedicated to St Augustine, where four resident friars would be engaged in prayer for the soul of their benefactor.²⁹ Marco planned for the contingency that the Dominicans refused the undertaking, in which case his bequest would pass successively to the Franciscans, Jeronymites and Servites; should all three decline, the fund would be donated for the marriages of four impoverished noblewomen. Müller notes that in fourteenth-century Venice it was not unusual for the very wealthy, particularly those lacking male heirs, to leave funds for the building of hospitals and religious houses, charitable deeds intended for the benefit of their souls. On 'mainland' Venice new foundations were eventually discouraged, resulting in the increased building of institutions on the lagoon islands, including Murano.³⁰ But the people of Murano were provoked at the sight of religious institutions supplanting residential property, and in 1359 the Podestà of Murano and local leaders successfully petitioned the Venetian government to veto the construction of further hospitals on the island. Marco Dolfín's was one of three cases successfully brought before the Maggior Consiglio (Great Council) in the 1390s by both Dominicans and Franciscans who exploited the embargo in order to divert bequests towards the ambitious rebuilding projects of their respective basilicas.³¹ In each case the arrangement must have been facilitated by the state

²⁷ Müller (1971), pp. 211-13.

²⁸ That Andriol, Marco's son died without male heirs is implicit from a document of 1375 regarding Marco Dolfín's estate. ASV, Procuratori di S Marco, b. 121 A, no. 18 / VIII.

²⁹ ASV, Procuratori di S Marco, Misti, b. 121 A, nos. 578 and 8J. The reference to Marco Dolfín's will and the related Maggior Consiglio ruling is cited in Mueller (1971), pp. 105-220, pp. 212-13 and Humfrey (1993), p. 344, cat. 16.

³⁰ Mueller (1971), p. 209.

³¹ The initiative had first been taken by the Dominicans in the case of Nicolò Lion. In his will (1353) Lion left funds to establish a small Dominican house on Murano. In 1390 the Prior and brothers of SS Giovanni e Paolo, supported by the Procurators of St Mark, pleaded their case before the Maggior Consiglio. They stated funds were insufficient to carry out the testator's wishes, argued two Dominican houses would be excessive in a small place like Murano, and alleged the inhabitants of Murano would be displeased at its erection. The friars proposed Lion's funds be deployed in the building of the new chapel

Procurators in their capacity as executors of the estates. Through the Procurators, the State enjoyed some control on the estates of the wealthy, and could invoke legal remedy where a testator's instructions were considered contrary to the general good.³² Further, the Dominicans of SS Giovanni e Paolo enjoyed favoured relations with the State, and their church was becoming the preferred ducal burial place, and benefited from an extraordinary degree of patrician patronage, becoming a civic focus second only to the *area Marciana*.³³

Marco Dolfín had died in or before 1375, and his legacy remained frozen until 1393 when the Dominicans applied to the Maggior Consiglio for approval to divert the fund for the re-building of their great church.³⁴ The Maggior Consiglio agreed to this, on condition the friars created a beautiful altar dedicated to St Augustine, *titulus* of Marco Dolfín's anticipated sanctuary, to be sited in an 'honourable' location in SS Giovanni e Paolo, with the Dolfín arms hung about it for posterity, and four Dominican brothers were to be employed in praying regularly for Marco Dolfín's soul.³⁵ In lieu of the small Dominican house on Murano, Marco Dolfín would thus be honoured posthumously with the *juspatronatus* of a funerary chapel dedicated to his preferred *titulus*, and his soul would be succoured by the number of priests he had prescribed. Whilst the detail of Dolfín's instructions would be modified, the authorities could be satisfied that its spiritual substance had been respected.

During the early fifteenth century building works on SS Giovanni e Paolo continued apace, and by 1417 the final bay was vaulted – this was the first bay on entering the

of S. Domenico at SS Giovanni e Paolo. Lion's soul could be taken care of by the use of the new chapel for the saying of prayers and masses night and day. Similarly, in 1391 the Franciscans obtained official sanction to divert the testamentary funds of Marco Gradenigo. Mueller (1971), p. 212, and p. 212, n. 203 and Paoletti (1893), I, p. 48, n. 4 and p. 89, doc. 3.

³² Mueller (1971), pp. 105 ff and p. 213.

³³ Iacobini, for example, notes: 'quel rapporto preferenziale che, dal principio del '200, continuava a legare i dogi ai Predicatori...'. Iacobini (1994), p. 200. On these favoured relations, see also Sorelli (1988), pp. 138-39, and Pincus (2000), p. 150. Pincus *ibid.*, pp. 148-65, also considers the significance of the ducal interments in the *cappella maggiore* at SS Giovanni e Paolo.

It should be noted that the Dominican convent did not officially fall under the *juspatronatus* of the Doge, as was the case with the convent of S Maria delle Vergini and several other religious foundations.

³⁴ Humfrey (1993), pp. 87-88 and p. 344.

³⁵ 'Cum dicti prior et fratres sint contenti et se offerant deputare In ordine suo conventus sanctorum Johannis et pauli tot fratres quot ordinat ipse testator qui continue orent deum pro anima defuncti predicti sicut nostro dominio et procuratoribus nostris predictis videbitur et placebit Et ultra hoc predicti prior et fratres teneantur et debeant deputare in honoribili loco ecclesiae sanctorum Johannis et pauli unum altare pulcrum sub vocabulo et ad honorem beati Augustini, sicut dictus testator voluit quod nominaretur locus predictus et debeant poni arma de cha delphyno dicto altari ut semper istud appareat ad memoriam futurorum.' ASV, Maggior Consiglio, Leona, f. 63 (23 February 1392, *more veneto*); and a copy of this: ASV, SS Giovanni e Paolo, b. D, fasc. VI. Cited more briefly by Mueller (1971), pp. 213, n. 204.

basilica, where the *St Augustine Polyptych* would be situated, as demarcated by the Dolfin arms.³⁶ The positioning of the Dolfin crests so as to span the width of the first bay may have been intended to indicate the portion of that building Dolfin's legacy had funded, just as the Gradenigo arms in the Frari are believed to indicate the section of the building financed by the legacy of Marco Gradenigo.³⁷ In any case, to the casual observer the arms would signal the Dolfin family's *juspatronatus*, and control over, this important space in the church.³⁸ However, the Dominicans were not expeditious in commissioning the altar of St Augustine, and the magnificent altarpiece by Bartolomeo was finally installed over a century after Marco Dolfin's death.

This chapter proposes that Domenico q. Dolfin Dolfin (*sic*) pressed the Dominican friars into meeting their full legal obligations towards his forebear Marco and, in consultation with them, organised the making of the altarpiece.³⁹ Of the three Dolfin family members of this period whose records are retained in the SS Giovanni e Paolo archive, only Domenico Dolfin q. Dolfin showed a keen interest in both the altar of St Augustine and the church itself. Moreover, neither Francesco Dolfin q. Bianco of Santa Marina (testament dated 1471) who desired burial at the church 'where my other forebears are', nor Lorenzo de Antonio Dolfin of Santa Giustina (testament dated 1474) who donated candles for the 'altar of our Lady', belonged to the appropriate branch of the large clan.⁴⁰ Instead, Domenico was of the same branch of the Dolfin family as Marco (fig. 2.09), and lived in the same neighbourhood, on the parish boundary of SS Apostoli and S. Giovanni Crisostomo, perhaps occupying the same palazzo on the Grand Canal (fig. 2.10).⁴¹ In 1473, when the *St Augustine Polyptych* was installed,

³⁶ See Iacobini on the date of the vault (1994), p. 202.

³⁷ Paoletti (1893), p. 46.

³⁸ On the significance and use of arms to indicate *juspatronatus* and control of ecclesiastical space, see J. Burke (2000), p. 52.

³⁹ 'dove son li altri mie precessori' (extract of testament of Francesco Dolfin, dated 1471); 'altar de nostra Dona che xe in la Chieixa de S: zuane et polo in Venexia' (extract of testament of Lorenzo de Antonio Dolfin, dated 1474). ASV, SS Giovanni e Paolo, b. D, fasc. XI and *ibid*, fasc XII.

⁴⁰ ASV, SS Giovanni e Paolo, b. D, fasc. XI and *ibid*, fasc XII

⁴¹ According to Barbaro's genealogies, Domenico's family hailed from the branch of the Dolfin clan descended from Zuane il Grande, the same branch as Marco Dolfin. However, Barbaro's version is not fully reliable and he is incorrect in his identification of Marco's father, (see below). ASV, Misc. Codici, I: Storia Veneta, nn. 17-23.

Marco Dolfin's will refers to his residence as 'la cha grande de confinio Sancti Canciani'; whilst Domenico noted his home 'in la Contra de S. Apostoli' in the 'Caxa da stastio sopra Canal Grando'. He mentions 'nostro Calle' and 'ruga nostra'. ASV, Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 121 A and ASV, Dieci Savi sopra le decime in Rialto, b. 16. In fact, SS Apostoli and S. Canciano are adjoining parishes and at the shared border of these is a large palazzo which still bears the Dolfin insignia on the *campo* side. Sotoportego Dolfin leads to the part of the palazzo which looks onto the Grand Canal. Nearby are two 'Calle Dolfin'. This palazzo, almost certainly the home of Domenico Dolfin, lies just within the present S. Canciano parish boundary, although it is physically closer to the parish church of SS Apostoli.

Domenico (b. c. 1445) was not yet thirty, but as first-born son he would have already assumed the responsibilities of the *paterfamilias* following the recent death of his father.⁴² One of Domenico's first undertakings in asserting his new role as family head may have been to organise the outstanding matter regarding his forebear's estate.

It is Domenico Dolfin's own will, written some nineteen years after the altarpiece was completed, which evidences his interest in the altar of St Augustine (appendix 6). The will demonstrates Domenico's cognisance of the traditional history of the Dolfin clan and it is reasonable to assume he was also aware that his forebear's attempt to establish a small Dominican house had been frustrated. In an extraordinary clause, Domenico commanded his own trustees follow his instructions closely, warning grimly that their own salvation would depend on it: 'And firstly, I will and order that my trustees be the magnificent Procurators of St Mark's [*de citra* and named others]... strictly to whom I entrust the duty of the execution and defence of my will and legacies, and I charge their souls with its [correct] execution.'⁴³

As noted above, Domenico stipulated burial at SS Giovanni e Paolo 'before the Altar of St Augustine... the one which has two coats of arms of the House of the Dolfin'. He continued: 'I want my body to be buried where the priest stands when he says mass'; although floor-tombs were quite usual, Domenico's explicit demand for proximity to the priest saying mass is exceptional, and emphasises his felt need for the redemptive rite of the Eucharist and his conviction in the role of the priesthood.⁴⁴ Whilst a floor-tomb demonstrated decorous humility, Domenico eschewed a modest funeral, the pious choice of many of his class: 'If it pleases God, I want to be buried in that place, with

⁴² That Domenico was the first-born son of Dolfin Dolfin q. Domenico is evident from the record of Domenico's presentation at the Balla d'Oro in 1463. ASV, Avogaria di Comun, reg. 164 / III. In the absence of birth registers, the 1463 presentation also allows Domenico's approximate birth date to be calculated, for Balla d'oro candidates were usually eighteen years old. Candidates were usually presented by their father or, in his absence, a close relative. Dolfin Dolfin presented his third son, Lorenzo, for the Balla d'Oro on 26 November 1468, but had died by 1 December 1473, when his widow, 'nobilis d[o]n[n]a francesca Trono [con]sh[o]rta q[uondam] S[er] delphini dolphin', presented their fourth son, Pietro: ASV, Avogaria di Comun, 164 / III. On the Balla d'Oro, see Chojnacki (1986).

⁴³ 'E prima voglio et ordino che i mie commissarij siano i magnifici Procuratori di san Marco di qua da canal: et appresso el Reverendo piovan de S Lio che al presente se atrova. Item Messer Andrea Mocenigo fo di Messer Aluixe, Messer Anzolo Barrozi fo di Messer Aluvixe fo di Reverendissimo vescovo de Padua e Messer Francesco Venier fo di Messer Aluixe da Riva de Biaxio. Ai quali strectissimamente, li recomando el cargo, della mia commessaria, e sopra lanime sue glimpono, la defension de essa, et la exegution, de i legatj', appendix 6.

⁴⁴ '...el corpo mio sia sepelido in la giesia di S. Zuanepolo al altar di S. Agostino, dentro dala porta a banda senestra, che e quel ha le do arme da cha Dolphin, nel qual, dove zapa el frate quando el dice messa, intendo sia facta, una sepoltura dove habi a esser posto el corpo mio', appendix 6.

the custom and ceremony in praise of the Almighty, which is fitting to my social standing...'.⁴⁵ Indeed, notwithstanding the humble tomb, interment before the splendid altar of *St Augustine* would surely afford Dolfín that 'degree of fame and...merit' which accrued to the increasing number of Venetians who built for themselves more lavish funerary monuments.⁴⁶ And interment at SS Giovanni e Paolo, of which an amazed fifteenth-century visitor declared the ducal tombs were more splendid than those of the popes of Rome, must have seemed auspicious.⁴⁷

In the absence of legitimate heirs, the lion's share of Domenico's estate would pass to his two illegitimate sons, Giovanni (Zuane) and Marco; (in order to retain wealth in the patriline, illegitimate male offspring usually received considerably less generous bequests than their legitimate brothers).⁴⁸ However, perhaps mindful of the fate of his forebear Marco's estate, Domenico provided an improbably long list of default heirs who would benefit in the event that both his sons died prematurely.

Further circumstantial evidence of Domenico's likely involvement in the execution of the altarpiece is his acquaintance with Bartolomeo Vivarini through the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and his close interest in the Dominican convent of SS Giovanni e Paolo and Dominican precepts more generally.⁴⁹ The most significant and unusual of the numerous and varied charitable bequests stipulated by Domenico was the establishment of an endowment at SS Giovanni e Paolo, the beneficiary of which would be selected every three years by the committee of the Scuola Grande di San Marco: 'For the benefit of my soul, I leave three hundred gold ducats...to be invested...in perpetuity. The interest will be given to a brother of SS Giovanni e Paolo...I intend that the person [selected] should be pious and refined in manner, and above all should be one of the most learned brothers of the monastery.' He went on to prescribe the rites which the

⁴⁵ 'Il qual mio corpo, voglio ivi sepolito sia se a dio piacerà, con quella cerimonia, e quella convenientia che al grado mio, a laude dell'omnipotente, sia condegna', appendix 6.

⁴⁶ Requests by the wealthy for modest funerals were motivated by a desire to conform to the Christian ideal of humility, and to avoid spending ruinously lavish sums. Ambrosini (1991), pp. 5-64, pp. 7-10. As noted in the introductory chapter, D. Romano (1987), p. 112-13, observed funerary arrangements of Venetians vacillated between extremes. Domenico did, however, set an upper limit for his funeral expenses.

⁴⁷ Felix Faber, cited in Pincus (2000), p. 148.

⁴⁸ Strategies employed to retain property within the patriline are outlined by D. Romano (1987), p. 45.

⁴⁹ In the register of members of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, Domenico Dolfín is listed under 'Nobeli del conseio': 'M[esser] domenego dolfín. q[uondam] m[esser] dolfín. s apostolo.' A cross in the margin and note indicate his death: 'mori adi 17 zener 1514'. ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 4, 33v. The Scuola's strong ties with the Dominican monastery are noted in Mignozzi (1981), p. 132. ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 121 and b. 122, for contracts between the Scuola and the convent.

beneficiary of the fund would perform before the *St Augustine Polyptych*: 'This [priest] will be obliged to say three masses per week in praise of God, for the benefit of my soul and the souls of my dead relatives... I intend that he will have this benefit for the saying of masses – but just as much so that he will have an opportunity to study, to become a worthy theologian, a defender of the Catholic faith or an excellent preacher'.⁵⁰ In another clause Domenico placed knowledge on a par with virtue and patriotism; should both his sons die, he willed that his estate pass to one of his nephews, the one chosen should be distinguished by his worthiness, virtue, scholarship and service to the State.⁵¹ The testament thus reveals Domenico Dolfín's high regard for theological orthodoxy (an important precept of the Dominican order), virtue and patriotism, as well as his affiliations to the Dominican order and the Scuola Grande di San Marco.

The Iconography of the *St Augustine Polyptych*

It appears that the various saints depicted in the *St Augustine Polyptych* were selected for their personal and civic associations, reflecting the spiritual, social and familial affiliations of Domenico Dolfín.

The only saint depicted in the altarpiece without namesakes in Domenico Dolfín's near genealogy was Augustine, and his presence was effectively stipulated by the 1393 Maggior Consiglio ruling which had diverted Marco Dolfín's funds and ordered the establishment of the altar under the *titulus* of St Augustine. In the polyptych Augustine is depicted as the personification of ecclesiastical authority, his robust build, commanding pose and long, bifurcated black beard presenting a formidable figure. Although the saint is raised on a carved stone plinth, the simple wooden chair contrasts with the imposing, architectonic marble thrones appearing in images of other iconic male saints by Bartolomeo, such as St Ambrose in the eponymous polyptych of 1477; the one significant detail of Augustine's chair is found in the lions' heads adorning the armrests, perhaps a suggestion that the patriarch was endowed with Solomonic

⁵⁰ 'Item lasso, per l'anima mia ducati trexento doro, i quali voglio siano messi dove parerano, a mie comissarii, chel fondi habi, a essere fermo, e perpetuo. La utilita, del qual, voglio sia data a uno frate di S. Zuane polo sopradicto. Il qual intendo, sia persona catholica, costumada e sopra tutto de i piu docti siano del dicto monestier. La intarada et provento di qual, ducati 300 voglio sia del dicto sacerdote. Il qual voglio sia obligato de dir ogni setimana messe 3 ad honorem Dei, per l'anima mia, e de i mie morti. Il qual beneficio, non meno intendo, lo lhabi, per dir le messe, cha per haver co'modo, di studiar, et farse valente theologo defensore dela fede catholica, o eccellente predicatore, cha per le messe preditte ad honorem Dei, ne le qual tre, ne sia una, di nostra dona avvocata di miseri peccatori.', appendix 6.

⁵¹ 'manchadi tutti do, voglio dicti beni vadino in uno di i fioli di mie fradelli, qual parera esser piu condegno, per virtu, scientia, e benemerito verso la patria', appendix 6.

wisdom.⁵² The volumes at the saint's feet allude obliquely to the Augustinian rule adopted by the Dominicans, which elsewhere is more explicitly referred to in the iconography showing St Augustine handing the rule to his followers.⁵³ Moreover, the books suggest Augustine's important contribution to theological tradition, and the Dominicans' emphasis on tradition and doctrinal orthodoxy, in accordance with Domenico Dolfin's endowment of the altar of St Augustine with the intention that its recipient would become a 'worthy theologian'.⁵⁴

The traditional, iconic representation of Augustine – enthroned, with his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing and his left clasping the shaft of a crozier (fig. 2.14), would also be adopted by Bartolomeo for the depiction of St Ambrose in the 1477 polyptych. In both cases the pose and sculptural style is highly reminiscent of the central wooden sculpture of Anthony Abbot (artist unknown) in Antonio Vivarini's *Pesaro Polyptych* of 1464 (fig. 5.09). The stylisation in the description of Augustine is heightened by the contrasting portrait-like naturalism of the physiognomies of the remaining male saints in the *St Augustine Polyptych*. Another iconographic source for the patriarch was perhaps the monumental *Carità Triptych* (fig. 2.13; 1446, Accademia, Venice), made by Giovanni d'Alemagna and Antonio Vivarini for the Scuola Grande della Carità, where St Augustine (extreme right) is depicted as robust and swarthy, with a striking long, dark beard and cope edged with representations of prophets. It is probable that Bartolomeo himself assisted in the *Carità Triptych*, as his apprenticeship must have been advanced by 1446 (only four years later he signed the Bologna *Certosa* altarpiece together with Antonio). Bartolomeo's possible contribution to the *Carità Triptych* is supported by the crisp drawing of drapery folds of Saints Ambrose and Augustine, a distinctive trait of his hand.

Each of the remaining male saints in the *St Augustine Polyptych* recall Christian names appearing several times in Domenico Dolfin's branch of the family (fig. 2.09). It was argued in the previous chapter that the inclusion of saints in an altarpiece could be seen as analogous to (and necessarily a function of) the naming of offspring, where a passing generation could be memorialised in the names of the newborn, and which resulted in the repetition of given names over generations. Given this process of repeated

⁵² For the *Sedes Sapientes* as an integral part of civic iconography, see Rosand (1984), pp. 177-96.

⁵³ This iconography may be seen at the Augustinian monastery of S. Stefano in Venice, in the carved lunette over the entrance to the cloister.

⁵⁴ 'per haver co'modo, d[i] studiar, [et] farse valente theologo defensore dela fede catholica', appendix 6.

memorialisation, it is proposed that onomastic saints in altarpieces may sometimes 'represent' more than one namesake in the commissioning family, and could also reflect how donors were often as concerned about prayers in aid of the souls of dead kin as for themselves. Indeed, Domenico Dolfín prescribed prayers for himself and his dead relatives: '[the priest will] be obligated to say three masses every week to the glory of God, for my soul, and for [the souls of] my dead kin'.⁵⁵

For example, the name Lorenzo was traditional in this branch of the Dolfín family and had been adopted over successive generations, and Domenico's relatives named Lorenzo included a younger brother, an uncle, and his great-great grandfather. Similarly, Giovanni (or Zuane and variants) had enjoyed a long tradition in the Dolfín clan generally, and there were a number of prominent family members for whom the Baptist could be considered a name-saint – including the traditional founder of the Dolfín dynasty, and the fourteenth-century Doge Giovanni Dolfín (d. 1361), who was interred at SS Giovanni e Paolo in a splendid tomb in the *cappella maggiore*.⁵⁶ Most significantly, Zuane was also the name of one of Domenico's sons. That it was the archetypal Christian preacher, John the Baptist chosen to 'represent' these individuals, rather than the Evangelist, is consonant with the alternative declared scope of Domenico's endowment attached to the altar – to create an 'excellent preacher'.⁵⁷

'Representing' the proposed *de facto* commissioner of the altarpiece, St Dominic occupied the most honourable position in the altarpiece, to the Virgin's right – significantly, the place often occupied by the donor, or the principal donor's patron saint. Despite the individuality of St Dominic's physiognomy (fig. 2.15), it is not proposed that Domenico Dolfín was guised as St Dominic – Dolfín was still under thirty at the time of the altarpiece commission, whereas the saint depicted here is a stolid

⁵⁵ 'Il q[u]al voglio sia obligato de dir ogni settimana messe 3 ad honorem Dei, p[er] l'anima mia, e de i mie morti', appendix 6.

⁵⁶ Giovanni 'Dolfín' Gradenigo supposedly founded the Dolfín dynasty. Pedrocco (1996), pp. 43-50, and p. 43.

According to Barbaro, 'Zuane il Grande di Cannaregio' headed the branch of the Dolfín to which both Marco and Domenico belonged. ASV, Misc. Codici, I: Storia Veneta, nn. 17-23.

Zuane was also the name of Domenico's uncle, first-born son of his father's generation. 'Joh[an]es delphino q[uondam] s[er] dominici' presented his younger brother, Domenico's father, 'ser delphinum delphino' at the Balla d'Oro in 1438. ASV, Avogaria di Comun, reg. 163 / II.

Doge Giovanni Dolfín (d. 1361) was not apparently of the same branch as Domenico. Pincus (2000) pp. 150-55, discusses the original form and significance of Doge Giovanni Dolfín's tomb, which was moved to a side chapel in the nineteenth century; its elaborate fresco surround was all but obliterated by the tomb of Andrea Vendramin which took its place.

⁵⁷ '...o eccellente predicatore...' appendix 6.

middle-aged man with creased brow and receding hairline. St Dominic was also the name-saint of other members of the relevant Dolfín branch: his paternal grandfather and a nephew shared Domenico's name. 'Domenico' was also the name of the father of Marco Dolfín (the original testator), for whom prayers had been expressly prescribed in Marco's will.⁵⁸

The family's preference for the name Domenico may have been stimulated by the proud 'memory' of a certain Domenico Dolfín of the parish of San Salvador, protagonist of one version of the *apparitio* legend (the rediscovery of St Mark's body in the Basilica in 1094, also known as the *inventio*; fig. 2.17). In this account, Dolfín was witness with others to the discovery of the body, but pious Dolfín had prayed so fervently he became ill, prompting the saint to miraculously extend his arm to present Dolfín with his episcopal ring. Such was the significance of the episode to the family's stature that a manuscript dating from around 1400, which was kept at St Mark's Basilica, comprised several miniatures including *St Mark Donating the Ring to Domenico Dolfín* (fig. 2.18) and eight representations of the ring framed by inscriptions eulogising the Dolfín clan.⁵⁹ The chain of identification between the patriciate, the Venetian State, and its patron saint will be explored more fully in the following chapter, but it is sufficient to note here that the legend signified the civic patron's approbation of the Dolfín, and may have been extrapolated as a legitimisation of their position as one of the most prestigious and influential of the patrician houses.

This version of the *apparitio* legend may have emerged around the time of the dogate of Giovanni Dolfín (d. 1361), and was perhaps contrived as the Dolfíns' response to the famous fragment of the True Cross, which since 1360 had been associated with the rival Vendramin family and the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista.⁶⁰ From the

⁵⁸ Although Barbaro states Marco was the son of Zuane 'il Grande' Dolfín, in a document of 1327 Marco is referred to by the patronym 'quondam Domenico', ASV, Procuratori di S Marco Misti, b. 121A. In his will Marco instructed that prayers be said for his father and mother.

⁵⁹ For an account of the legend and its significance, see Muir (1984), pp. 97-101. See Manno for the manuscript (BMC, Codice Cicogna 2987-88, no. 17). Manno (1995), p. 235, n. 8, also Pedrocco (1996), p. 43.

⁶⁰ See Muir (1984), pp. 99-100, for a comparison with the alternative legend of the discovery of the donation of the ring to a fisherman, instructed by the saint to present it to the Doge. Muir finds more civic resonance in the older 'fisherman' myth, which he interprets as the concession of the Episcopal power of St Mark to the Doge, enabled through the consensus of the people. It is not suggested here that the alternative 'Dolfín' legend was intended to negate the notion of the people's consent of the political regime signified in the more famous 'fisherman' legend, rather that it emerged as a family's competitive response to a rival clan, played through the medium of the Scuole Grandi. Although Muir states the 'Dolfín' legend did not emerge in the sixteenth-century, its origins may be located at least a century earlier by dint of the manuscript.

fifteenth century the Dolfín family permitted the Scuola Grande di San Marco to parade the ring in a sumptuous tabernacle at the processions which marked the feast of St Mark on April 25, and that of the *apparitio* on June 25. The concession of the ring to the Scuola Grande di San Marco not only allowed the confraternity to keep pace with the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista which literally paraded its competitive advantage in the relic of the True Cross, but must have simultaneously asserted the honour and venerability of the Dolfín clan to its rivals. In the context of a commune which in the interest of social cohesion discouraged competitive display on the part of individuals or clans, the feast-day procession of the *scuole* provided a licit vehicle to subtly assert the Dolfín family's status. As Brown has observed with regard to both public processions and artistic patronage, the *scuole* provided an outlet for group display, where personal ostentation would have been viewed with suspicion.⁶¹

It may not be coincidental that the proposed commissioner of the *St Augustine Polyptych*, Domenico Dolfín, was a prominent member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco and in 1509, during his lifetime, the family finally conceded the ring to the Scuola on a long-term secured loan. The fame of the legend must have been assured through the association of the ring with the Scuola, the biannual processions, and the commemoration of the *apparitio* in the liturgy of the Basilica on June 25.⁶² It is conceivable the arrangement of the altarpiece, with St Dominic placed immediately above St Mark (and the altar demarcated by the Dolfín crests), was intended to evoke the *apparitio* and the famous virtue of Domenico Dolfín of San Salvador, namesake of the *de facto* commissioner of the altarpiece, who received the approbation of the city's patron.

There were other compelling reasons for the inclusion of St Mark in the altarpiece, including Domenico's affiliation with the eponymous Scuola Grande, the board of which he entrusted with the task of electing the recipients of the endowment connected with the altar of St Augustine.⁶³ In its turn, the Scuola was affiliated to SS Giovanni e Paolo and enjoyed *juspatronatus* of the presbytery, where Marcian symbols appeared in

The fragment of the True Cross was celebrated in the famous late fifteenth-century cycle which originally adorned the *albergo* of the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista (Accademia, Venice), and Titian's *Vendramin Family* (c. 1543, National Gallery, London). The relic was presented to Andrea Vendramin in 1360, as representative of the Scuola. See, for example, Gould (1975), p. 284-87, cat. 4452.

⁶¹ P. F. Brown (1987), pp. 189 ff.

⁶² It is recorded in a document dating from the early seventeenth century that the legend was remembered in prayers during the June 25 liturgy. Manno (1995), p. 235, no. 8.

⁶³ See above and appendix 6.

numerous places, including the windows and the central keystone of the vault, and St Mark probably featured prominently on the high altar.⁶⁴ With regard to the commemoration of members of the Dolfin family, St Mark was, of course, onomastic saint of both Marco Dolfin, the original benefactor, as well as Domenico's other son.

§

It is further suggested that the polyptych operated at a unified theological level, comprising a programme which affirmed the Dominicans' continuation of the true apostolic tradition. Given Dolfin's interest in, and his connections with, SS Giovanni e Paolo, it seems likely he devised the programme of the *St Augustine* altarpiece in collaboration with the local friars who, in any case, were charged with funding the altar. If, as Meilman implies, Venetian patrician donors were disinclined to erect altarpieces in Dominican houses because of the friars' tendency to control altarpiece themes and impose Dominican programmes, this would not have concerned Dolfin, whose will demonstrates his close identification with the Dominican mission.⁶⁵ An overtly Dominican altarpiece programme would have accorded with his values: we have seen how Domenico's esteem for the Order of Preachers prompted his imaginative and unusual bequest, promoting Dominican theological investigation, preaching and defence of the faith, with the stipulation that the 'pious and cultured and above all... learned' beneficiary perform the masses for the salvation of his soul. Dolfin's aims in establishing the bursary were completely consonant with the friars' commitment to '...fighting heresy through a kind of learned preaching well grounded in careful theological preparation'.⁶⁶ That Dolfin would sponsor intellectual endeavour, not as an end in itself, but with the express scope of training new preachers, may reflect the tradition of the theology school at SS Giovanni e Paolo, where a century earlier the highly influential Giovanni Dominici had been lector for over a decade. Dominici 'was deeply suspicious of ... learning for its own sake' but 'taught that intellectual pursuits

⁶⁴ The Scuola Grande di San Marco had enjoyed the *juspatronatus* of the *cappella maggiore* since 1437. Although there is no record as to the appearance of the high altar at this time, given the Scuola's patronage rights it is likely St Mark featured prominently in the high altarpiece. Moretti in Sponza (1996), p. 63. On relations between the scuola and the monastery, see Mignozzi (1981), p. 132. Various accords between the Scuola and the Dominican friars are recorded in documents found at the ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 121 and *ibid*, b. 122. On Marcian details in the presbytery, see Manno, in Manno and Sponza (1995), p. 17.

⁶⁵ Meilman (2000), p. 26.

⁶⁶ Hood (1993), p. 19.

should be the handmaids of a friar's personal ministry'.⁶⁷

Composed of three registers, the two principal ones each of three panels, the formal arrangement of the polyptych appears to have alluded to the triune God. The arrangement is consonant with several phrases in Dolfin's will which also recall the theological import of the number three, notably in relation to rites performed for the benefit of his soul: '...for three days after the separation of my soul from my body, be carried out those acts of charity, as seem fitting to my above noted commissioners... together with masses of Our Lady, St Gregory and others for the souls of the dead [to be said] thrice'.⁶⁸ The inclusion of the Virgin and Child, with the Eucharist evoked by the Child's body, recalls Domenico Dolfin's emphasised prescription of the Mass of Our Lady and his conviction in the Virgin's role as principal intercessor: '...[of] the aforesaid masses to the glory of God, of which there are three, one of them should be the Mass of Our Lady advocate of miserable sinners.'⁶⁹

As well as evoking significant personal and civic associations, each saint in the altarpiece hailed from a different era in the Christian history. As precursor and herald of Christ, John the Baptist may have represented continuity between the prophets of the Old Testament (represented on Augustine's cope and perhaps on any pinnacles of the frame) and the Evangelists of the New. Of course, the Baptist was sometimes depicted preaching to crowds in the open air in much the same way contemporary popular mendicant preachers did, and must have represented an exemplum to the Order of Preachers which had been instrumental in the devolution of preaching, formerly the preserve of high-ranking ecclesiasts, to the general priesthood.⁷⁰ Indeed, in the 1530s the figure of the Baptist replaced that of Thomas Aquinas on the tomb of St Dominic himself (San Domenico, Bologna), a substitution which Dodsworth has suggested was 'in keeping with...the theme of Dominic as teacher and receiver of the apostolic mission'.⁷¹ In their turn, St Mark is representative of the Evangelists, whilst St Lawrence (fig. 2.16), deacon in the church during Roman times, could signify the early Christian church and the early Christian martyrs, and St Augustine represents the

⁶⁷ Hood (1993), pp. 23-24.

⁶⁸ '...e che per 3 zorni dapoì la mia separatio[n], d[e] l'anima dal corpo sia facto quelle elemosine conventiente, dove e come a sopradicti comissarii parerano, con le messe de n[ost]ra dona, S. Gregorio, et altre, p[er] l'anima di morti triplicate', appendix 6.

⁶⁹ 'le messe p[re]ditte ad honorem Dei, ne le q[u]al tre, ne sia una, d[i] n[ost]ra dona avvocata d[i] miseri peccatori', appendix 6.

⁷⁰ Penone (1998), p. 11.

⁷¹ Dodsworth (1992), p. 286.

patriarchs, fathers of modern Western Christianity. In suggesting the Old Testament tradition, the patriarch's cope also places Augustine – and by association the Dominicans who adopted his rule – in the tradition of the biblical law-givers. The tradition is completed and continued in the inclusion of St Dominic.

St Dominic's honoured position at the Virgin's right may allude subtly to the vision of the Blessed Reginald of Orleans in which the Virgin expressly gave her approbation on the Dominican Order, as well as emphasising the importance of Marian devotion to the friars.⁷² The saint is emblematically linked with the Virgin by the lily, the symbol of chastity common to both Dominic and the Virgin. Likewise, the Annunciation appearing on the skirt of Lawrence's dalmatic suggests the promise of the Incarnation, as fulfilled in the adjacent Virgin and Child. The recurrent motif of the book may perhaps allude both to tradition, as well as the Dominican regard for scholarship, such that the friars' only licit personal possessions were books.⁷³ At the centre of this arrangement, the Child may be read as the Word incarnate.

In its broad encompassing of the Christian tradition and the placement of the Dominican order within that, the *St Augustine Polyptych* was distinguished from nearby altars which were under the *juspatronatus* of *scuole piccole* dedicated respectively to Dominican saints Peter Martyr, St Vincent Ferrer and St Catherine of Siena.⁷⁴ The scope of its programme (though not the iconographic particulars) is instead congruent with two of the most important monuments in Dominican tradition – the tomb of St Peter Martyr (San Eustorgio, Milan), which according to Dodsworth conveys the 'divine approval of the Dominican Order', and that of St Dominic himself which 'stresses the Dominican mission to teach, and the story of the Order's approbation.'⁷⁵ The form and iconography of the *St Augustine Polyptych* are also consonant with works analysed by Hood in his examination of Dominican choir altarpieces in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Tuscany. Hood has shown how such altarpieces were typically non-narrative, large, multi-storied polyptychs depicting pairs of saints set hierarchically around a central Virgin and Child, with the saints selected to represent the passing of

⁷² Dodsworth (1992), p. 288.

⁷³ Manno, in Manno and Sponza (1995), p. 15. Of course, in its first centuries the Dominican order went through periods of laxity and indiscipline, with repeated attempts at reform. The tenet of poverty was widely flouted at both a personal and convent level. Examples of laxity towards academic study are cited by Penone as symptomatic of Dominican decadence. Penone (1998), p. 102, p. 135, pp. 140-42, p. 152, p. 159, pp. 160-62, p. 255.

⁷⁴ See Humfrey (1988), pp. 404-9 on the establishment of this 'quartet' of altars at SS Giovanni e Paolo.

⁷⁵ Dodsworth (1992), p. 287 & p. 284.

the apostolic tradition or '*traditio*' to the Dominicans, and their continuation of the doctrinally orthodox mission.⁷⁶

The Place of the *St Augustine Polyptych* in Bartolomeo's Career and Formal Development

Before concluding, it is appropriate to place the *St Augustine Polyptych* in the context of Bartolomeo's career and oeuvre. Although Bartolomeo had already undertaken important contracts, this altarpiece afforded him the opportunity to impress an ever wider local audience, and it seems he set out to produce a dazzling work which Ridolfi would affirm outshone his other altarpieces – although the reduced state of the polyptych makes its original splendour difficult to appreciate. Situated in the most visible and public area of the prestigious Dominican basilica, the magnificent polyptych occupied an extremely prominent and indeed 'honourable' location. No doubt, the commission from Procurator Domenico Diedo was highly prestigious, but the secluded private chapel situated on the island of the Certosa was not well placed to advertise the artist's skills and attract further custom, whereas Bartolomeo's lost narratives at the Scuola Grande di San Marco would have certainly raised his profile, at least among the Scuola membership. But the *St Augustine Polyptych*, so grandly scaled and prominently situated, surely brought the artist to a wider audience, and it seems no coincidence that over the rest of the decade Bartolomeo enjoyed his busiest period in altarpiece production for the home market. The *St Augustine* altarpiece must also have impressed some of Bartolomeo's colleagues; one artist undoubtedly influenced by Bartolomeo's depiction of Augustine was Lazzaro Bastiani, who overtly borrowed the stern, iconic figure in his *St Augustine giving the Rule* (later 1470s?, private collection) made for the Augustinian canons at San Salvador.⁷⁷

The *St Augustine Polyptych* was certainly as grand as the nearby altarpieces in SS Giovanni e Paolo – the monumental *St Vincent Ferrer* and *St Catherine of Siena* altarpieces (figs. 2.19-2.20), as well as the lost early altarpiece of *St Peter Martyr*, perhaps a polyptych by Antonio Vivarini – magnificent works which were produced in a competitive atmosphere and calculated to bring honour to the respective sodalities

⁷⁶ Hood (1993), particularly chapter 3; Hood's arguments are also summarised in Meilman (2000), pp. 22-24.

⁷⁷ Bastiani's *St Augustine* is reproduced in Sartor (1997), fig. 3.

which commissioned them.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Bartolomeo's posthumous reputation may have been compromised by his apparent failure to respond to Giovanni Bellini's innovative *St Catherine of Siena Altarpiece*. However, several points should be made – not least that the date of the undocumented *St Catherine of Siena Altarpiece* is uncertain, and it is quite possible Bellini's *pala* post-dated the *St Augustine Polyptych*.⁷⁹ Further, as Bartolomeo had already experimented with the single *pala* format, if not nearly as consummately as Bellini, it seems most unlikely that he insisted on the employment of the polyptych format – the traditional format of the *St Augustine Polyptych* was therefore almost certainly owed to the commissioner's instructions. As we have seen, Domenico Dolfin was a conservative man, an upholder of religious orthodoxy and traditional civic values. Bartolomeo was not the only leading artist still making important works in the polyptych format – one near-contemporary altarpiece was that which Zoppo made in 1468 for the high altar of the local church of Santa Giustina.⁸⁰ This was also a polyptych with naturalistically portrayed saints set against a gold background and enclosed in a gothic frame. Given the location of the Santa Giustina, this altarpiece was almost certainly known to Dolfin, who may well have indicated it as an example to Bartolomeo.

The *St Augustine Polyptych* is stylistically restrained, in line with the polyptych made for Domenico Diedo a decade earlier, although figures have become more substantial. Bartolomeo's quirky interpretation of the Paduan renaissance style is notably absent, as is the material detail found in the *St Mark Triptych*, or the idiosyncratic physiognomies of some of his near-contemporary works, such as the pinched-nosed saints in the 1475 *Lussingrande Altarpiece*. Whilst *St Augustine* retains the lapidary quality of many of Bartolomeo's figures, Saints Dominic and Lawrence are executed with striking naturalism. Only rarely in Bartolomeo's work does it seem figures were drawn from life, yet the physiognomies of Saints Lawrence and Dominic were rendered with a portrait-like individuality, anatomy is convincing, and the drawing, for example of Lawrence's hand, is particularly fine and exact. This extraordinary naturalism, set in contrast with a conventional gold background, recalls Saints Nicholas and Dominic of

⁷⁸ See Humfrey (1988), pp. 404-9. Almost nothing is known of the original altarpiece made for the *scuola* of St Peter Martyr, which Sansovino suggested was by Jacobello del Fiore. However, Humfrey has questioned this, and suggested panels by Antonio Vivarini depicting the life of St Peter Martyr could have come from this work. Humfrey (1993), p. 327 n.93.

⁷⁹ The dating of the *pala* of *St Catherine of Siena* has been much discussed, particularly in relation to Antonello's *San Cassiano Altarpiece* (1475-6). Current opinion generally places Bellini's altarpiece just antecedent to the *San Cassiano Altarpiece*. Humfrey (1993), pp. 343-44, cat. 12.

⁸⁰ This polyptych was broken up and its panels dispersed, see Humfrey (1993), p. 343, cat. 11.

Fra Angelico's *Perugia Triptych* (c. 1450, Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria).

Bartolomeo's depiction of St Lawrence is also iconographically similar to the same saint as depicted by Fra Angelico in the frescoes of the Cappella Niccolina (c. 1445-47) at the Vatican – works which Toscano affirms informed the work of many local and foreign artists.⁸¹ It is unknown if Bartolomeo himself enjoyed direct contact with the Dominican artist or his work, although tenuous connections might be drawn through the Dominican order, and even the papal commissioner of the Cappella Niccolina frescoes.⁸²

§

This chapter has examined how the creation of the *St Augustine* altar was necessitated by the terms of the Great Council ruling of 1393 in respect of the estate of Marco 'trivella' Dolfin, whilst the unusual circumstances of the funding of the altar illustrates the informal collaboration between the local Mendicant orders and the Venetian State which helped finance the ambitious reconstruction of the city's important gothic basilicas. It has been proposed here that the altarpiece was finally brought about under the impetus of Domenico Dolfin who was acquainted with the artist through the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and who probably acted in concert with the friars at SS Giovanni e Paolo to create a sophisticated altarpiece programme – ostensibly a straightforward array of saints – which layered apposite theological and civic allusions.

Yet the *St Augustine* altar was also contrived by Domenico Dolfin as an object of familial commemoration, and specifically as a funerary chapel for himself and his only sons, Giovanni and Marco.⁸³ As illegitimate offspring, during their lifetimes Giovanni and Marco would have been excluded from the public role enjoyed by their legitimate peers – only legitimate sons were enfranchised and able to participate in sessions of the Maggior Consiglio.⁸⁴ But in death Domenico's sons were 'legitimised' as members of

⁸¹ Toscano (1987), p. 509.

⁸² The frescoes were commissioned by either Pope Eugenius IV or Nicholas V. Born Gabriele Condulmer, Eugenius IV (1431-47) was Venetian, whilst Nicholas V (1447-55) had, of course, commissioned the Vivarini, perhaps indirectly, to make the 1450 Bologna *Certosa* altarpiece.

⁸³ No other children of Domenico Dolfin, legitimate or otherwise, have been identified.

⁸⁴ I have not found references to Domenico's sons in patrician birth records, marriage records nor the Balla d'Oro registers, which were intended for legitimate offspring only as canonical records proving noble status, and allowed the legitimate young male patrician to enter public life. Chojnacki (1986), p. 799. Domenico does not mention the mother(s) of his sons in his will and I have been unable to establish her (or their) identity. He was not married until 1503, when he wed Elisabetta, daughter of Antonio

the Dolfin clan through their burial alongside their father before the impressive *St Augustine Polyptych*, with each of their names inscribed upon the tomb and the altarpiece bearing the images of their saintly namesakes together on the and that of the Virgin, supreme heavenly intercessor. It is significant that the brothers' heavenly namesakes were inserted as a pair in the altarpiece, flanking the image of the altar *titulus*. As Romano has observed, the location and company of burial were extremely significant to the Venetian nobility, and the desire of Venetian noblemen to be buried with their kin may be interpreted as an affirmation of lineage.⁸⁵ Accordingly, the inscription on the tomb-slab describes Giovanni and Marco as Domenico's sons and heirs – notwithstanding the official lineage passed through the legitimate offspring of Domenico's younger brother.⁸⁶

Badoer and widow of Giacomo q. Michele Capello. ASV, Avogaria di Comun, Cronaca Matrimoni, reg. 107/2, 114v. (Elisabetta's first marriage to Giacomo di Michele took place in 1487.)

⁸⁵ Romano (1987), pp. 114-15.

⁸⁶ The will of Zaune, son of Domenico, does not state a preferred burial site nor funeral arrangements. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 202, no. 206 and b. 203, no. 181. Zuane and Marco appear to have been Domenico's only heirs. Barbaro's genealogy shows the official heredity passed through Domenico's younger brother Piero and his legitimate offspring.

Piero Corner and the *St Mark Triptych*

(1474)

*'la capella nostra da li frar minori'*¹

The *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01) is the earlier of two important altarpieces Bartolomeo made for private chapels at the major Franciscan church in Venice, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Frari) (figs. 3.02-3.03). Remarkably, both altarpieces are found *in situ* and retain their original frames. The *St Mark Triptych* is signed and dated: OPVS. FACTVM. PER BARTHOLOMEVM. / VIVARINVM. DE. MVRIANO. 1474. In the central panel appears St Mark Enthroned (166 x 68 cm); Saints John the Baptist and Jerome are depicted in the left-hand panel (165 x 57 cm) and the figures in the right-hand panel may be best identified as Saint Augustine and John the Evangelist (165 x 57 cm).² The flamboyant gothic frame also comprises figurative elements: a female figure crowns the central panel, perhaps representing the Annunciate Virgin, a pair of acolytes surmounts the piers between the panels, and two Old Testament prophets with turbans and long beards form pinnacles over the side panels. The banderol of the prophet on the left is damaged but probably identifies Jeremiah : [ECC?]E' GER[EMI]A P[RO^{TA}] and the prophet to the right is identified as Jonah : [ECC?]E' IONÀ PRO^{TA}. No figurative work appears in the elaborately traced *predella*. Although triptych in format and set in a gothic frame, the painted panels of the altarpiece are executed in a developed renaissance idiom, by contrast to the more traditional polyptychs produced for Diedo and Dolfen discussed in the foregoing chapters.

The *St Mark Triptych* is found in the large private chapel formerly of a branch of the Corner clan. It is well known that the chapel was constructed in accordance with the testamentary wishes of Ferigo (Federico) Corner (d. 1382), identified as the wealthiest man in Venice of his time, and that the construction and decoration of the chapel was managed by his descendents. However, little attention has been paid to the

¹ Will of Piero q. Zuane Corner, 9 October, 1473. An abridged version of the will is transcribed in appendix 7.

² Humfrey (1993), p. 345, no. 18 identifies the bishop saint as Augustine. See below for the identification of the other figure as St John the Evangelist.

commissioning of the major figurative components of the chapel – the altarpiece, and a cenotaph memorial to the founder of the chapel (fig. 3.06); the cenotaph is set into the wall facing the chapel's internal doorway, and comprises a carved angel bearing a scroll with a commemorative inscription, installed in a classicising tabernacle framed by a Mantegnesque fresco.

In this chapter it will be argued that Piero q. Zuane Corner (c. 1410 – after 9 October, 1473), Ferigo's grandson, was responsible for the creation of both cenotaph and altarpiece, and Piero's role and concerns as patron will be examined in detail. The chapel is considered here as an affirmation of outstanding civic participation on the part of one of the most prominent clans in Venice, and it may be seen to conform to the growing propagandistic trend in patrician funerary monuments of the later *quattrocento*.

Having remained relatively unchanged, the Corner chapel also provides the best opportunity to examine how Bartolomeo conceived an altarpiece in relation to its environment. It will be argued that in designing the altarpiece, the artist sensitively attended to the chapel's lighting conditions, form and dimensions, as well as the formal qualities and motifs employed in the other dominant feature of the chapel, the cenotaph. Being thus carefully related to the architectonic form of the chapel, the altarpiece operates as an element of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in both its formal and iconological aspects. Therefore, before examining the altarpiece itself, the patronage context, and the form and decorative components of the chapel will be discussed in some detail.

The Corner Family and their Chapel at the Frari

Said to have originated from ancient Rome or Constantinople and supposedly amongst the first settlers on the Rivoalto, the very numerous and prosperous Corner (or Cornaro; Lat. Cornelius) counted amongst the most venerable patrician families of Venice.³ Family members played an important role in the affairs of State, most famously in the fourteenth century when Marco Corner (1365-68) was elected Doge, and in the later fifteenth century when Caterina Cornaro became Queen of Cyprus, eventually ceding the island to the Venetian Republic. Aside from their chapel at the Frari, the Corner name is associated with several outstanding early renaissance artistic projects including

³ These mythical Roman origins were validated through the Latinised surname: 'Li Cornero detti anticam[en]te Coronelli, e Cornelis...', BMC, Cod. Cicogna, b. 3417, no. 79. See also P. F. Brown (1996), p. 252 and p. 323.

a palace fresco cycle (early-mid fifteenth century, lost) by an artist perhaps identifiable as Giovanni d'Alemagna, the Corner chapel at SS Apostoli attributed to Codussi (c. 1495) and a cycle of paintings commissioned from Mantegna celebrating the deeds of Roman 'ancestors' of the Corner.⁴

Corner patronage of the Frari church extends at least as far back as 1340 when a certain Zuane (Giovanni) Corner of the parish of Santa Fosca made an important endowment towards the ongoing reconstruction of the church (begun c. 1340) and the embellishment of its altars: '...one part of the income be given every year in perpetuity to the Friars Minor for the work on their church [building] and the decoration of their altars'.⁵ It is not known whether this individual was closely related to Ferigo q. Beello Corner, the founder of the Frari chapel whose branch of the family would later be known as the Corner-Piscopia (fig. 3.09).

Ferigo Corner was considered by his contemporaries as Venice's unofficial leading citizen.⁶ Together with his brother and another business partner, he had amassed a fortune through production and trade in commodities including sugar and salt from Cyprus and, at the time of the 1379 *estimo* (tax estimate), he was officially recorded as the wealthiest man in Venice;⁷ for services to the King of Cyprus, Ferigo was rewarded with a Knighthood and lands on the island, including the feudal holding of Piscopia (Episcopi).⁸ In his native city, Ferigo's success was marked by his acquisition of a magnificent Veneto-Byzantine *palazzo* on the Grand Canal in the parish of San Luca, which he embellished with a propagandistic frieze and where he accommodated royalty

⁴ See below for the palace fresco cycle associated with Giovanni d'Alemagna.

Mantegna completed only the *Introduction of the Cult of Cybele in Rome* (1506, National Gallery, London) before his death; a second scene *The Continence of Publius Cornelius Scipio* was executed by Giovanni Bellini (shortly after 1506, National Gallery, Washington). See C. M. Brown (1974), and P. F. Brown (1996), pp. 252-54.

⁵ '...una parte dell'entrata sia data ogn'anno in perpetuo ai Frati Minori per lavorar la sua Chiesa et ornamento de suoi Altari'. ASV, Frari, b. 3, 5r. Cited in Paoletti (1893), p. 89.

⁶ Billanovich (perhaps relying on the chapel inscription?), (1962), p. 132.

⁷ D. Romano (1987), pp. 32-34, notes that from a population of up to 100,000 persons, 2,000 qualified for the *estimo*, with assets worth over 300 *lire*. Ferigo Corner owned property worth more than 60,000 *lire a grossi* and was the only individual worth over 50,000 *lire*. See also Luzzato (1954), p. 135.

⁸ Ferigo had offered accommodation and considerable financial assistance of 60,000 gold ducats to King Peter I of Lusignano of Cyprus, who had come west in 1361 in search of allies and funding to ward off a Turkish military threat. Over the course of the 1360s Ferigo enjoyed the King's increasing confidence and undertook diplomatic work for him as well as advancing him further sums of money. Luzzato (1954), p. 119.

and other important official visitors to the city (figs. 3.10-3.11).⁹ Ferigo's preparations for the afterlife were equally conspicuous. In a city where private family chapels were rare, he bequeathed up to three thousand ducats for the erection of a funerary chapel for himself and his brother Marco. The details, including the chapel's precise location within the Frari, were left to the executors' discretion:

Firstly, I will that in the place of the Friars Minor in Venice there be made a chapel in that part [of the church] which seems best to [my] testamentary executors, at a cost of two to three thousand ducats as seems fitting to them, and in that [chapel] to make a tomb, and in that [tomb] be put the body of the blessed soul of my brother Marco, and my [body].¹⁰

Works on the chapel were stalled for over three decades, perhaps because of the ongoing rebuilding of the main church and a major financial setback for the Corner family.¹¹ The site of the chapel was agreed in 1417 between Ferigo's son, Zuane Corner, and Scipione Bon, Procurator of the Frari who was directing the church rebuilding project. From a document of 1420 it appears that, although Zuane had already progressed some way with the erection of the chapel, it was now to be re-sited.¹² The prospect of the inconvenient relocation of the chapel was perhaps the cause of the 'differences and arguments...regarding the construction of the said chapel' indicated in the record. It was determined the chapel be shifted back 'to the left side of the High Altar in the aforesaid new Church', which corresponds to its actual position.¹³ A document of October 1422 provides a *terminus post quem* for the recommencement of works, presumed to have started shortly thereafter.¹⁴ The record is silent from this date

⁹ See, for example, Ravegnani (1983), p. 179. Howard (1975), p. 123, observed the *palazzo* (now called Palazzo Loredan) represents a rare example of a Veneto-Byzantine merchant's palace. See below on the fourteenth-century frieze decorating the *palazzo* exterior and frescoes commissioned for its interior.

¹⁰ 'Prima voio, che a' lo luogo dei Frati Menori in Venexia sia facta una Capella in quale parte meo parerra alli Comissarii spendando in quella ducati domillia, in tre millia como a quelli pareva, e i quella far fare una sepultura, in la qual sia messo el corpo della benedetta anema de mio fradello Marco, el mio.' References and copied extracts of the will dated 1378 and 1382 found at: ASV, Frari, b.1, I, 21r, *ibid.*, II, 8v, no. 47. Copy and original document found at: *ibid.*, b. 129. Cited Scolari (1920), p. 154, and Goffen (1986), p. 24 and p. 178, n. 93.

¹¹ As suggested by Griffiths (1976), pp. 13-14. The family faced financial crisis because the debt owed by the royal house of Cyprus turned bad. However, Zuane succeeded in restoring the family's wealth. Luzzato (1954), pp. 122-23.

¹² Two documents relating to the proposed construction date from 1417 and 1420. ASV, Frari b. 129, no. 47. Also (summary) ASV, Frari, b. 1, II, nos. 47 and 48. Excerpts cited in Paoletti (1893), I, p. 89. See Scolari (1920), p. 154, on the construction of the chapel in relation to the reconstruction of the main church building.

¹³ '...differenze e liti...per occasion della Fabrica di detta Capella...'; '...al fianco sinistro dell'Altar Maggior di detta Chiesa Nouva...' Document dated 10 June, 1420, cited Paoletti (1893), I, p. 89.

¹⁴ A further document of 1422, also cited by Paoletti, principally relates to the *scuola* of St Francis, but mentions the thirty-seven year delay in the construction of Ferigo's chapel. Paoletti (1893), p. 89.

until Piero Corner's will of 1473, but, given that finishing touches to the chapel's interior were still outstanding then, it seems unlikely that progress on the construction was expeditious.

From the exterior, the large Corner chapel appears as a distinct architectonic vessel appended to the liturgical north of the Frari (fig. 3.04). Its form and masonry – brick with Istrian stone pinnacles and cusped decoration in the brickwork beneath the cornice – were calculated to harmonise with the main church building, as well as the imposing Miani chapel, set forward of it. Buttressing piers demarcate the extremes of the chapel façade, into which were embedded the Corner arms cut in stone;¹⁵ an oculus, bordered in Istrian stone, punctures the brick façade at about two-thirds up its exterior height. The only opulent feature of the chapel exterior is its gothic portal (fig. 3.05), comprising polygonal piers surmounted by pinnacles, and an ogee tympanum bordered by foliate crockets and finished with a finial which apparently represents Christ, rather than St Mark, *titulus* of the chapel. A very fine lunette in high relief, apparently by a different hand from the portal surround, is set in the tympanum over the doorway and depicts the Madonna Enthroned with two angels (unknown sculptor, c. 1430, Istrian stone).¹⁶ Although Fogolari doubted the lunette was original to the chapel due to the representation of the Virgin in place of St Mark, its provenance is assured by the form of the Virgin's throne which echoes the portal surround;¹⁷ the iconography of the lunette may surely be explained by the dedication of the church itself to 'Santa Maria Gloriosa'. The high quality of the relief is considered evidence of Zuane q. Ferigo Corner's discerning taste as an artistic patron.¹⁸ Indeed, at about this time Zuane may have commissioned Giovanni da Ulma (often identified by scholars as Giovanni d'Alemagna) to produce a fresco cycle (lost) for the renowned Corner Piscopia palazzo.¹⁹

Augusti (1996), p. 320, affirmed the builders of the chapel were Stefano Petrizolo and Giovanni di Francesco da Cremona.

¹⁵ Rizzi (1987), p. 401 no. 349, states the Corner arms may be considered contemporary with the chapel's construction.

¹⁶ Fogolari (1931), text opposite pl. 2, attributed the work to the Bon workshop of the 1440s, although most scholars, such as Augusti (1996), p. 320, suggested an un-named sculptor of Tuscan origin. Wolters dated the work to c. 1422, attributing it to the 'Master of the Mascoli Chapel', whom he presumes to be Tuscan. Wolters' attribution is corroborated by the very close correspondence of the angels in the Corner lunette with those appearing on the altar of the Mascoli chapel. Wolters (1976), p. 277, no. 234.

¹⁷ Fogolari (1931), text opposite pl. 2.

¹⁸ Holgate (1998), p. 126.

¹⁹ On the frescoes commissioned by 'messer zuan cornaro', see Holgate (1998), pp. 120-27.

The external portal of the chapel is now walled up and the chapel may only be entered today via its gated internal entrance, through the church. There are no sarcophagi in the chapel as the Corner were buried in a floor-tomb set before the altar steps, where the marble slab cover lacks any inscription and the tomb's only embellishment is its *bas relief* grapevine border. However, the impressive cenotaph (fig. 3.06) conspicuously commemorates Ferigo Corner and, by inference, his branch of the Corner clan. Set into the left wall of the chapel (when facing the altar) the cenotaph addresses the public, for it is positioned so as to be readily viewed from behind the private chapel's gate. The fine monument comprises a near life-size angel carved in the round and installed in a classicising tabernacle, set off against a painted dark blue background (now faded). The angel resembles a Roman winged victory, and bears a gilded scroll inscribed with Roman uncial script.²⁰ The apex of the tabernacle is formed of a shell lunette bordered by egg-and-dart, dental and beaded mouldings, above which a sacred flame springs from an urn; its base is supported by an ornamental bracket comprising a pair of cornucopia which frames the Corner arms. From Grevembroch's illustration, it seems the cenotaph was originally more liberally gilded than it now appears (of course, the gilding recorded in Grevembroch could equally have been added during heavy-handed 'restorations').²¹ There is no consensus on the authorship of the cenotaph, although the delicacy and classical restraint of the *bas relief* decoration of pilasters and entablature, distinct from the organic exuberance of the work of the Rizzo and Lombardo shops, has invited comparison with the work of Paduan and Tuscan sculptors.²² Sansovino indeed recorded the cenotaph as the work of an otherwise unknown 'Iacomo Padovano', although this attribution is not considered reliable.²³

The cenotaph inscription lavishly praises Ferigo Corner's virtue, lineage and magnificent wealth which he used piously and patriotically to succour the people during

²⁰ As observed by Fiocco (1926), p. 536 and Markham Schulz (1978), p. 6.

²¹ Grevembroch, BMC, *Monumenta Veneta*, III, 1759, fol. 21.

²² Pincus notes the 'Tuscan mannerisms' of the master of the Corner monument, whose background she suggests was, however, Paduan. She associates a significant body of work in Venice with this sculptor including elements of the tomb of Orsato Giustiniani (see chapter 1 here), and an important figure from the Arco Foscari. Pincus (1976), pp. 176-7 and pp. 347-51. Markham Schulz (1978), p. 6, compares stylistic aspects of the cenotaph with the work of Donatello as well as the Ovetari Chapel.

²³ 'L'Angelo nella cappella di San Marco fu di mano di Iacomo Padouano'. Sansovino (1998), p. 188. Sansovino's attribution is not accepted by all scholars because a sculptor of this name is otherwise unknown, the attribution is uncorroborated and Sansovino was sometimes inaccurate. Goffen and P. F. Brown give the work to Jacopo Padovano. Goffen (1986) p. 24 and p. 179, n. 95, and P. F. Brown (1996), p. 237.

the War of Chioggia against the Genoese (1379-81):²⁴

FEDERICO CORNARIO
OPUM. FAMILIAE VITRUTIS
EXIMIO SPLENDORE CLARO
QVI GENEVESI BELLO LABORAN
TEM FAME .PV. REM SVSTINVT.
OPES CVM AMICORVM VSVI ET
PATRIAE LABORIUBVS. TVM DIVINIS
REBVS MAGNIFICE PIEQ. SEMPER
IMPERTIT. EX MODESTIA ETIAM ATQ.
IVUSTITIA PRIMAM TVLIT LAVDEM.
INGENTI OMNIVM MOESTITIA
EXTINCTO . TESTE FVNERE NON
MINVS CIVIVM LACHRYMIS . QVAM
MERITIS LAVDIBVS CELEBRATO . ET
EIVS POSTERIS IOANNES FL.
HOC SACELLVM DICAUIT²⁵

In recording Zuane's erection of the chapel in memory of his father, drawing attention to his filial devotion, the inscription also effectively memorialised Zuane himself. Of course, self-affirming 'signatures' on the part of commissioners of funerary monuments are common, but as Pincus observes, the reference here to Zuane concerns the erection of the chapel, not the specific commissioning of the cenotaph.²⁶ Zuane's presumed date of death does not therefore provide a *terminus ante quem* for the cenotaph, the date of which is extremely problematic. The work instead seems most plausibly datable to the mid-1460s

²⁴ This war was the culmination of rivalry between Venice and Genoa during the fourteenth century. The Genoese gain of Chioggia, a town on the Venetian Lagoon, potentially threatened the Venetian Republic itself. Although Venice regained Chioggia, the Republic was obliged to make a number of concessions to the Genoese at the 1381 Peace of Turin. The 1379 *estimo*, in which Ferigo was recorded the wealthiest man in Venice, had been undertaken with the intention of forcing loans from affluent Venetians for the war effort. Ferigo may thus have been obliged to hand over large sums - notwithstanding the insinuation of his willing munificence in the inscription. Griffiths (1976), p. 13.

²⁵ 'To Federico Cornaro / famous for the great splendour / of his wealth, of his lineage and his merit / who during the Genoese war / came to the aid of his famished country / used his affluence with generosity and piety / not only to assist friends and for the country's necessity / but also in the service of God. For his modesty and / his fairness, he was greatly praised. / His death brought great sorrow to all / Attested by his funeral [at which he was] celebrated / with deserved praise, and no less by the people's tears / To him and to his heirs, his son Giovanni / dedicated this chapel.'

²⁶ Pincus (1976), p. 177, n.7.

postdating Zuane's death (1454?) by about a decade.²⁷ Moreover, Bartolomeo's playful adoption and adaptation of the form and motifs of the cenotaph indicates it was *in situ* by 1473-74 when the artist was working on the altarpiece.²⁸

Given a dating in the later 1460s, the monument – which denotes a shift in the decorative style of the chapel from gothic to renaissance (excepting the altarpiece frame) – would have been devised by Zuane's eldest surviving son Piero, grandson of Ferigo, who is identified below as the altarpiece commissioner;²⁹ as Zuane's testamentary commissioners, his sons had inherited responsibility for the chapel's completion.³⁰ Further indication of Piero Corner's authorship of the epitaph to his grandfather is found in its implicit commendation of filial dutifulness – this was a virtue Piero felt strongly, and in his own will of 1473 he wrote of the “honour and debt” due to *his* father.³¹ In terms of the question over the cenotaph date, it is significant that Piero, who it will be seen was intent on managing a range of familial issues beyond the grave, found it unnecessary to specify the form and inscription of his grandfather's public memorial.

The fresco framing the cenotaph was presumably commissioned shortly after the completion of the latter. It is framed by fictive mouldings, including a band of bay-leaf garland; against a dark purple or porphyry-coloured background, appropriate for mourning, three pairs of sorrowful grisaille *putti* frame the tabernacle bearing festoons of fruit and leaves. In the upper corners a pair of male profile portraits are depicted as

²⁷ From his career path, Zuane's birth date has been calculated as c. 1370. M. King (1986), p. 354. The date of his death is also unknown. However by 2 June, 1454, when he wrote his will, Zuane was probably in his mid-eighties. The hurried form of the autograph testament indicates it was penned *in extremis* and its brevity is remarkable for a man of Zuane Corner's status. The will lacks the usual statement of mental, intellectual and physical condition and the chapel is overlooked. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 923, no. 52.

Fiocco (1926), pp. 535-36, proposed a precocious date for the cenotaph (early 1450s), presumably necessitated by the author's attribution of the fresco cornice to Mantegna in the period of the artist's marriage to Nicolsia Bellini. Markham Schulz (1978), p. 6, dated it to the 1450s, thus distinguishing the cenotaph as a remarkably early example of a classicising sculpture in the city. P.F. Brown (1996), p. 237, dated it to 'c. 1460s'; Humfrey, (1993), p. 40, to c. 1464, and Pincus to 1465-69. Pincus (1976), p. 349, n. 174 and p. 351, affirmed the lettering of the inscription is most unlikely to predate 1460. Lightbown (1986), p. 476, favours a date in the 1470s. Some scholars unwarrantedly take the 1473 will of Piero q. Zuane Corner as a *terminus post quem* for the chapel's entire internal decoration, including the cenotaph.

²⁸ See below on the ways in which Bartolomeo picked up on the forms and motifs of the cenotaph.

²⁹ Ferigo, the eldest of Zuane's sons, died before 1461. Fantin, the youngest of the three sons, died between in the period 1465-70 (see below). It is possible he worked with his brother Piero on the chapel project before his death.

³⁰ Although the chapel is not cited explicitly in Zuane's 1454 will, as his sole executors, his sons would have necessarily assumed responsibility for it; 'tuta la mia fachulta, mobeles e stabeles faseno de mie fiuolj Ferigo, Piero e Fantin egualmente deser in tre deos divisa... iqual mie fiuolj tuti 3 voio sia mie chomessarij'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 923, no. 52.

³¹ See appendix 7.

trompe l'oeil marble *tondi* reliefs. The profiles, which Fiocco recognised as a quotation from Mantegna's *St James before Herod Agrippa* (fig. 3.08; destroyed, 1451, formerly Ovetari chapel, Eremitani, Padua), were assumed to be generic representations of Roman emperors.³² But it seems more likely in this context that they were intended as idealised portraits of Ferigo and Zuane named respectively at the beginning and end of the epitaph. The profiles follow the fashion for classicising portraits which frequently appeared on the obverse of medals or, indeed, funerary monuments of the period. A similar motif is employed on the sarcophagus of the slightly later funerary monument of Doge Tron in the *cappella maggiore* of the Frari (1471-73), interpreted by Pincus as the Four Ages of Man.³³ Like the reliefs on the Tron tomb, the medallions on the Corner cenotaph and in the frieze running below it (see below) represent older and younger male profiles. The more senior profile, to the left, stern and heavy-jowled, is crowned with a laurel wreath, perhaps an allusion to Ferigo's reputation and deeds as recited in the epitaph, the younger profile is more damaged and almost illegible, though Fiocco perceived a light crown.³⁴ The Classical forms and references accorded with the family's keen engagement with humanist discourse as well as suggesting their mythical Roman origins. For instance, Zuane Corner has been identified amongst the first generation of Venetian humanists. It is known from correspondence that he engaged leading humanist scholars to tutor his eldest son Ferigo, and it seems reasonable to suppose he provided similarly for the education of his younger sons.³⁵

The authorship of the abraded fresco is as problematic as that of the tabernacle.³⁶ Certainly a work of quality, the fresco is articulated in the Paduan style associated with Mantegna. Although Fiocco ascribed the fresco to Mantegna himself, this attribution may be disregarded as the fresco necessarily post-dates the tabernacle which, as noted above, was probably created post-1460, by which time Mantegna was engaged at the Mantuan Court;³⁷ the fresco is therefore more usually given to a 'follower' of his. Of course, Bartolomeo Vivarini's debt to Mantegna and the Paduan style is widely

³² Fiocco (1959), pp. 116-17.

³³ Pincus (1981), pp. 136-39.

³⁴ 'adorno di una corona a rebbi puntini'. Fiocco (1926), p. 542. Fiocco (1959), p. 116, also noted the similarity of this crown with that appearing on the profile heads in the triumphal arch in Mantegna's *Condemnation of St James* fresco in the Ovetari chapel.

³⁵ On the humanist scholarship and associations of Zuane (Giovanni) Corner, see M. King (1986), particularly pp. 354-55.

³⁶ The work is in poor condition, in part due to modern intervention. At one stage it was removed from its proper position and was placed over the internal entrance to the Corner chapel. Fiocco (1926), p. 535.

³⁷ Markham Schulz (1978), p. 6, tentatively concurs with Fiocco's attribution to Mantegna. Lightbown (1986), p. 476, cat. 160, instead gives it to a follower of Mantegna.

acknowledged, and it is worth considering whether he executed the fresco as well as the altarpiece. Whilst the format is unlike that of any other work in the artist's extant oeuvre, it seems Bartolomeo's technical versatility is underestimated – indeed, in her study of the Tuscan workshop, Thomas observes that scholars have generally failed to acknowledge the wide product range offered by a given studio and the diverse media in which a single artist might work.³⁸ It was suggested in the introductory chapter here that Bartolomeo worked in fresco and was perhaps the author of the Evangelists of the Ovetari vault, as he was the member of the Vivarini shop whose work demonstrates stylistic affinity with their robustly plastic execution. As for the *trompe l'oeil* execution of the animated 'sculpted' *putti* in the Corner chapel fresco, these correspond with the most distinctive characteristics of Bartolomeo's style – the plastic rendering of figures so as to resemble figure sculptures and the *trompe l'oeil* depiction of sculpted marble. Indeed, these devices are employed in the central panel of the *St Mark Triptych*, most pertinently with the *putto* 'carved' into the tympanum of the throne. That said, there is insufficient stylistic affinity with Bartolomeo's works to finally settle the question of the fresco's authorship.

Minor fresco decorations also frame the spandrels of the Corner chapel vault. This work bears no stylistic relation to the cenotaph fresco, and may be related to the equivalent decoration in the other chapels of the liturgical east end of the Frari; it is fair to assume this was executed shortly after the construction of the chapel was completed. Along the liturgical north and south walls of the chapel run low benches embellished with finely carved *all'antica* relief friezes, incorporating griffins and the Corner arms. The side below the cenotaph also includes four medallions in which profile heads appear, designed to resemble those in the fresco above.

The area of the altar itself has been subject to some alteration. Regularly spaced depressions in the topmost step before the altar indicates a balustrade enclosed the area of the altar at some point in the chapel's history. The stone altar is composite, its sides are evidently modern, although its frontal comprises a fourteenth-century(?) relief framed by billet moulding (fig. 3.07). The boldly carved relief depicts the Lamb of God in a medallion and supported by a pair of kneeling angels. It is possible this work was salvaged from an altar in the earlier Frari church building.

³⁸ Thomas (1995), pp. 62-64.

Original to the chapel's fifteenth-century decoration are three pairs of stained-glass windows in the apse (fig. 3.12). From their attributes and costumes, the saints in these may be best identified (from left to right) as: Jerome, an Apostle (?), the Virgin and Child, Lucy or other female martyr, Gregory the Great and Catherine of Alexandria.³⁹ (A lower register of coloured-glass windows depicting fruit and flower garlands was installed in the early twentieth century.)⁴⁰ Figures in the earlier windows are probably too generic for a meaningful attribution to be made, although it has been suggested Bartolomeo himself designed them, given his association with the design of the great window at SS Giovanni e Paolo.⁴¹ Ridolfi was the first to attribute the SS Giovanni e Paolo window to Bartolomeo, dating it to 1473, coeval with the *St Augustine Polyptych*.⁴² Notwithstanding an inscription to Girolamo Mocetto at the base of the window, modern scholars upheld Ridolfi's attribution in respect of the design of its upper register.⁴³ But the complex classicising architectonic setting of the upper register of the SS Giovanni e Paolo window is quite unlike any setting in Bartolomeo's oeuvre, and this, together with the contradictory inscription on the window itself, seem sufficient to discount that attribution. It seems likely Bartolomeo's familial connections with Murano and glassmaking, together with the polyptych-like form of the window at SS Giovanni e Paolo, suggested his name to Ridolfi as designer of that window. Although window design would certainly make a noteworthy addition to Bartolomeo's oeuvre, such attributions are tenuous and there are no compelling reasons, formal or documentary, for accepting them.

The Commissioning of the Altarpiece

As there is no surviving contract for the *St Mark Triptych*, the circumstances of the altarpiece commission have remained mysterious. However, evidence indicates Piero q. Zuane, proposed above as the commissioner of the cenotaph, also commissioned the altarpiece. Although Piero's 1473 will has already been associated with the chapel

³⁹ The unidentified apostle is depicted with a book and pen and has long white hair and beard. Sartori (1949), p. 68, identified this figure as Mark, and the female martyr as Lucy.

⁴⁰ The modern glass was made by Giovanni Beltrami in 1907. P. L. Marini (n.d.), p. 22.

⁴¹ Humfrey (1993), p. 345, no. 18.

⁴² Ridolfi (1999), p. 55.

⁴³ S. Romano (1981) dated the upper register of the window to the 1490s, and suggested it was the result of collaboration by several artists, including artists associated with Bartolomeo's shop such as Alvise Vivarini and Andrea da Murano. Sponza (1982), p. 291 and p. 292 n. 19, attributed three of the four full-length figures of the upper register to Bartolomeo himself and dated this section of the window closer to the traditional date of 1473. He also noted Bartolomeo's supposed association with windows at the Dominican church of San Pietro Martire on Murano (lost during the eighteenth century).

through a brief and inaccurate excerpt found in the Frari archive, it was assumed Piero had no part in the completion of the chapel and had simply delegated its completion to his 'heirs and nephews'.⁴⁴ But examination of the complete original testament, together with circumstantial evidence, indicates that these major components of the chapel were probably commissioned by Piero himself.

Most significantly, at the time the altarpiece was commissioned, Piero was the only surviving son and executor of his father Zuane q. Ferigo. As joint executors, Zuane's sons would have been equally responsible for the completion of the chapel at the Frari; however, Ferigo, the eldest son, died before 1461, and Fantin, the youngest, between 1465 and 1470, leaving Piero with the task of completing the ancestral chapel.⁴⁵

The commissioning date of the altarpiece may be taken as 1473, given its completion in 1474 and allowing for around ten months' labour (it is noted in foregoing chapters here that Bartolomeo took the best part of a year to complete a major altarpiece). Indeed, Piero's will of 9 October, 1473 demonstrates that work on the chapel was ongoing, although he was concerned to arrange for its completion in the event of his untimely death: 'if our chapel at the [church of] the Friars Minor be not complete before my death'; Piero's 'if' and his use of the hypothetical subjunctive implies the contingent nature of the testamentary provision, and that at the time of writing he was still personally engaged with the chapel's decoration which he hoped to bring to conclusion.⁴⁶

However, in the event of his death, Piero's nephews would assume responsibility:

'I will ... that if our chapel at the Friars Minor be not complete before my death, my aforesaid heirs and nephews be obliged to complete it well and suitably with every necessary thing, with the funds from my father's estate'⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Fogolari (1931), text opp. pl. 12. As Fogolari identified the testator as 'Piero *quondam* Ferigo', it is clear he relied upon the late copied excerpt of Piero's will found in the Frari archive which includes this error.

⁴⁵ Ferigo q. Zuane (*sic*) must have died before 1461 when he was referred to as '...*quondam* domini Federici' in the will of Marina ux. Piero Corner, ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1420, no. 23. Fantin died between 1465, when his wife wrote her will, and 25 November, 1470, when his son Giovanni was presented at the Balla d'Oro: 'Iohanem cornario *q[uon]dam* S Fantin ... filius legitimu[s] dicti *q[uon]dam* s[er] fantinj...'. Testament of Ixabeta Corner, ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1062 no.75 and Avogaria di Comun, reg. 164/III, 83v. Piero likewise referred to his late brother as: '*quondam* mio fradelo miser Fantin'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 479, 114v-116r, also *ibid.* b. 482, no. 768.

⁴⁶ 'se la capella nostra da li frar minori *non stia* compida avanti la mia morte', appendix 7.

⁴⁷ 'Voio...che se la capella nostra da li frar minori non stia compida avanti la mia morte i detti mie heredi e nevodi siano tegnudi de farla compir de I beni de la comessaria de mio padre ben et [con]venientemente de

Piero allowed his nephews a short deadline of eighteen months which suggests the chapel was in any case nearing completion, and his exhortation to complete it properly with the necessary items for the celebration of mass indicates outstanding 'items' were liturgical objects:

But if it should happen, which I don't expect, that through the negligence of my aforesaid nephews one-and-a-half years passes after my death and the aforesaid chapel has not been completed suitably, I want it to be in the liberty and power of he or those who are the Procurators of the church of Santa Maria of the Friars Minor to press my aforesaid nephews by force of this my testament, to complete it properly with all the necessary things in order that two masses can be celebrated every day, as the friars are obliged to say for the money which has been deposited at the Bonds Chamber, and of which [sum] I have managed the interest.⁴⁸

When composing his will, Piero was described as: 'sound of mind...weak of body'.⁴⁹ He was about sixty-three years of age and, though in poor health, his lengthy and considered testament could not have been penned hastily from the deathbed like that of his father. No doubt mindful of his present frailty and his position as the most senior member of the family, Piero carefully used his testament as an instrument to organise and advise on the family's economic and social affairs, providing *inter alia* for the future marriages of his nieces and nephews (he apparently had no surviving offspring), exhorting his nephews to cooperative and harmonious relations and setting down the deeds of Ferigo for posterity. It is in this pre-emptory context that we should understand the provisions for the chapel; it is however uncertain whether Piero lived to see the conclusion of the chapel's embellishment.⁵⁰

An unrelated manuscript corroborates Piero's commissioning of the altarpiece. For the

ogni cossa necessaria et cusi qua[n]to piu strettamente posso li prego che debino fare p[er] suo honor et debito', appendix 7.

⁴⁸ 'Ma se l'occorre, che nol credo che per neglegentia de iditi mie nevodi el passese uno anno e mezzo da poi la mia morte che dita capella convenientemente non fosse compida, voio chel sta in liberta et podesta de quello, o quelli, che siano procuratori de la giesa de Santa Maria de Frar Menori de strenzar diti mie nevodi per vigor de questo mio testamento a compirla convenientemente de tute cosse necessarie azo che in quella se posse ogni di celebrare do messe, come i frari son tegnudi de dir per idanari i qual zu gran tempo li sono sta scriti ala camera de Imprestidi de i qual i sto drio el pro', appendix 7.

⁴⁹ 'mente sanus...corp[or]e languans'. Codicil to the will of Piero Corner, reference as given in appendix 7.

⁵⁰ As noted in his will, Piero Corner was a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco. As he was not included in its membership list of 1480, he had probably died before that year. ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 4.

depiction of St Mark enthroned in the *Commissio* of Procurator of St Mark's Andrea Lione (unknown artist, Cod. Lat. X, 358 (3517), f. 5r., Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice) is clearly based on the central panel of the altarpiece (figs. 3.13-3.14); the distinctive form of the throne follows that in the triptych, and the features, attire and attitude of St Mark are also taken from it. For instance, in both the illumination and the triptych the saint is shown blessing, with his left hand resting on an upright, closed book. Apart from the necessary simplification of detail in the miniature, the only significant difference is the inclusion of a donor portrait of the Procurator to whom the saint's gesture of benediction is directed. On the assumption it is more likely the large panel informed the tiny illumination than vice versa, it is fair to conclude the central panel of the triptych was complete by November 1473, the assumed date of the manuscript (Procurator Leone's investiture took place on November 10).⁵¹ As the altarpiece was inscribed (and presumably erected in the chapel) in 1474, the illuminator must have seen the St Mark panel in Bartolomeo's *bottega*.

Bartolomeo Vivarini would have been acquainted with Piero through the Scuola Grande di San Marco (fig. 2.11), which may have facilitated his gaining of the Corner commission. Like Bartolomeo's earlier commissioners, Domenico Diedo and Domenico Dolfín, Piero was a member of the Scuola, as he stated in his will: 'the Scuola of Messer St Mark in which I am [enrolled]'.⁵²

It is also to be noted that Piero's will was witnessed by Leonardo Boldrin, an artist linked with the Vivarini shop as was noted in the introductory chapter here.⁵³ The signature represents a tenuous link between Boldrin and a project probably already in hand by Bartolomeo, but is insufficient to confirm Boldrin assisted in any way in the decoration of the chapel. As Boldrin was resident in San Luca, the same parish as Piero Corner, this alone may explain their acquaintance.

The Iconography and Form of the *St Mark Triptych*

Turning now to examine the altarpiece in detail, it seems appropriate to firstly confirm the identity of the saint in the central panel as Mark (fig. 3.20), for Bartolomeo's

⁵¹ The illumination has been attributed to Leonardo Bellini. S. Marcon in Zorzi (1988), pp.160-61. For the date of Procurator Leone's investiture see Martinioni in Sansovino (1998) p. 51.

⁵² '...la Schuola Miser San Marco ne la qual Io son...', appendix 7.

⁵³ Paoletti and Ludwig cite the will only with regard to Boldrin's signature. The reference to b. 481 is (now) incorrect. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 445 note 114.

reduction of saintly attributes has led to confusion over the identity of several of the saints. Indeed, one of Piero Corner's nephews apparently mistook the central figure for Christ, and requested burial with his family in the vault of the 'chapel of Our Lord';⁵⁴ the Saint's hieratic pose indeed recalls that of the Pantocrator, further his only attribute is a closed book, and the Baptist seems to implicate him as the Lamb of God. However, comparison of the altarpiece's central figure with Bartolomeo's *Redeemer Enthroned*, (fig. 3.21; c. 1480, Museo Civico, Bassano) confirms the swarthy, rugged saint in the Corner altarpiece was not intended as Christ who is portrayed with more youthful and graceful features. Moreover, the Corner chapel has long been identified with St Mark, and the portrayal of the saint conforms to traditional representations of him as seen, for example, in the north-east spandrel of the *Ascension Dome* at St Mark's basilica (twelfth century, mosaic) or the *Pala Feriale* (fig. 3.17; Paolo, Luca and Giovanni Veneziano, 1345, Museo della Basilica di San Marco, Venice), as well as in contemporary depictions, including Mantegna's *St Mark in a Niche* (fig. 3.19; c. 1448-49, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt) which bears an inscription identifying the saint, Castagno's St Mark in the apse vault at San Zaccaria and, most significantly, the St Mark roundel from the Ovetari vault (fig. 3.18).⁵⁵ However, the adoption of the Pantocrator iconography, which recalls Christ in the *Ascension dome* at St Mark's (fig. 3.22), or Castagno's God the Father at S. Zaccaria (fig. 0.07), serves to add Christological and eschatological dimensions to the altarpiece, the latter reinforced by the presence of St John the Evangelist, as author of the Apocalypse. This iconography also underlines Mark's privileged status in relation to Christ, an important aspect of the Marcian iconography of Venice.⁵⁶ Other subtle Christological references may be found in the frame: the Virgin Annunciate alludes to the Incarnation, the prophet Jeremiah recalls the Passion which he foretold, and Jonah, in his escape from the belly of the whale, prefigured the Resurrection.

The circumstances of the chapel's dedication to St Mark are mysterious. The earliest

⁵⁴ 'in Convenventu[m] fra[tr]um minor[um] in archa Capp[e]lle do[mi]ni n[ost]ri'. Will of Girolamo q. Fantin Corner, 1498. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 52, no. 263. As he mentioned the burials of his late father and children in the tomb, it seems unlikely Girolamo intended a different chapel from the family chapel at the Frari. In her will of September 6, 1474, Gerolamo's mother also requested burial there: '...volo sepeliri in archa nostra posta in capela Ecc. Fratrum Menorum'. Testament of Ixabeta Corner ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1062, no. 134. (Ixabeta did not request this in her earlier will of 1465, *ibid.* no. 75.)

⁵⁵ As early as 1581 Sansovino referred to the 'capella di San Marco', Sansovino (1998), p. 188.

⁵⁶ Mark's privileged association with Christ in Venetian iconography is argued by Loechel (1996), p. 476 ff.

documents suggest that a *titulus* had not yet been established, referring to the chapel by the founder's name: 'the chapel commissioned by the late Ferigo Cornaro...' or 'aforesaid chapel' and so forth.⁵⁷ Moreover, in Ferigo's time an altar at the Frari was already dedicated to St Mark, the *titulus* of which would not change until 1396, fourteen years after Ferigo's death.⁵⁸ As noted above, the lunette relief in the tympanum above the external portal, commissioned by Zuane Corner around 1430, represents the Madonna enthroned, alluding to the dedication of the Frari church, rather than St Mark.

It is therefore likely the dedication to St Mark came about under Piero Corner's stewardship of the chapel's decoration, and at his behest.⁵⁹ St Mark was a fitting choice of *titulus* for the Corner chapel for several reasons. Of course, the dedication commemorated the interment of Ferigo's brother Marco in the chapel in the absence of a suitable St Frederick as namesake of Ferigo Corner himself.⁶⁰ But Piero's allegiance to the Scuola Grande di San Marco and his apparent devotion to the Saint may have also influenced the dedication. In planning his own obsequies, Piero requested:

...the first time they congregate, [if] the aforesaid guardian and company [of the Scuola Grande di San Marco] are willing, they ask all the brothers in the meeting room of the aforesaid scuola [to go], if they will, before the altar of Messer St Mark and pray devoutly to God for my soul, to kneel and say one Paternoster and one Hail Mary⁶¹

As a member of the *scuola*, Bartolomeo himself would have participated in such funerary observances before the 'altar of St Mark', the focal point of the meeting-room and the object of innumerable supplications and masses for the souls of deceased brethren. The altar would therefore have been a very familiar, and even affective,

⁵⁷ 'la Capella ordinata dal q. Ferigo Cornaro...'; 'detta Capella'. Paoletti (1893), I, p. 89 no. 5.

⁵⁸ On the change in dedication of the earlier altar of St Mark to St Andrew, see Goffen (1986), p. 177, n. 79.

⁵⁹ '...lay patrons of chapels and side altars were normally permitted to choose their own dedications, in accordance with their devotional interests; and these interests would in turn be reflected in the choice of subject-matter.' Humfrey (1990), p. 191.

⁶⁰ As noted above, the executors were bound to make a tomb for Ferigo and his brother Marco: '...far fare una sepultura, in la qual sia messo el corpo della benedetta anema de mio fradello Marco...'. However, the will excerpt (at least as found in the Frari archive) does not stipulate the dedication of the chapel to San Marco. ASV, Frari, B 129. Without citing references, Sartori (1949), p. 67, states '...[Ferigo] ordinò che venisse una cappella dedicata all'evangelista S Marco'; it is likely Sartori relied on Fogolari (1931) text opp. pl. 12, who implied that the dedication was due to the burial in the chapel of Marco. For example, there is no listing for St Frederick in Kaftal (1978).

⁶¹ 'Ma che la prima volta che i se congregano insieme, el dito guardian et compagni voino pregar tuti ifradeli che nela salla de la dita schuolla *davanti laltare de miser San Marco* voino pregar devotamente dio per lanema mia, digando inzenochioni uno paternostro et una avemaria.' appendix 7.

object to artist and patron. Unfortunately it is impossible to tell whether the altarpiece at the scuola served as a model for the triptych, for it would have been destroyed in the 1485 conflagration of the *albergo*. The description of the altarpiece and its *cortina* in the 1466 inventory of the scuola is very sketchy, although the altarpiece must have been a traditional panel or polyptych showing the saint iconically (enthroned?) against a gold ground: 'one gilded altarpiece with Messer St Mark / one azure canvas altarpiece-cover with St Mark in the centre, bordered with a grapevine in gold'.⁶² The saint's benediction in the Corner altarpiece, apparently addressed to a suppliant before the altar, 'responds' to pious petitions such as those Piero planned for his own obsequies, and was befitting to the function of the altarpiece as a focus for masses to relieve the purgatorial sufferings of dead kin.

But the figure of St Mark also encompassed wider civic connotations which rendered the saint a highly suitable altar dedicatee for a leading family which sought to publicly identify itself with the success of the Republic. For the Evangelist was inextricably and universally identified with the Republic and the figure of the Doge, and the image or symbol of St Mark was integral to the rhetorical affirmation of Venetian civic identity.⁶³ Whereas modest households apparently avoided appropriating the saint's image, such was the identification of the ruling class with the State, families like the Corner apparently had no qualms about appropriating Marcian and other State iconographies even in unofficial and non-dogal contexts.⁶⁴ For instance, the funerary monument of Benedetto Pesaro (d. 1503, Lorenzo Bregno and Baccio da Montelupo, Frari), created a generation after the completion of the Corner chapel, includes a pair of roundels with the Lion of St Mark amongst other explicit symbols of the Republic.⁶⁵ Likewise, over a century before the decoration of his funerary Chapel, Ferigo Corner had promoted the civic, international and aristocratic identity of his family through the conflation of familial and State iconography in the impressive carved frieze installed on the façade of

⁶² '1^a palla de l'altar con Misier san Marcho dorado. 1^a cortina azura de tella con san Marco in mezzo con 1^a vida d'oro atorno'. Cited P. F. Brown (1988), p. 269.

⁶³ Fossati (see below) and Loechel (1996), p. 475. See Pincus for iconographies associating the Doge with St Mark. Pincus (2000), p. 11, p. 80, p. 128.

⁶⁴ Images of the saint were absent from artisans' homes, apparently deemed inappropriate: '...nessun inventario evoca un quadro dell'Evangelista. Quest'assenza é caratteristica di Venezia e della sua particolare struttura politica: "Marco" si identifica con la Repubblica. É il Santo politico per eccellenza che, con un certo timore, si evita di rappresentare anche nelle dimore di coloro che reggono lo Stato e con esso in parte si identificano, i patrizi.' Palumbo-Fossati (1984), p. 151.

⁶⁵ For discussion of this monument and the appropriation of State symbolism within its iconography, see P.F. Brown (1996), pp. 236-38.

the family *palazzo* (fig. 3.11).⁶⁶ Although St Mark is absent from the iconography of the frieze, the figures of *Justice* and *Fortitude* associate the family with the Republic, as these were virtues associated with Venice and, given their formal aspect, were perhaps conflated with *Venetia*, the personification of the Republic.⁶⁷ The insignia of the Kingdom of Cyprus and the eponymous Order (with which Ferigo was honoured), figures of *David* and *Goliath*, interpreted as Virtue overcoming Vice, respectively proclaimed the family's connections with the royal household of Cyprus, its patriotic valour and virtue.⁶⁸ In a similarly rhetorical way, the altarpiece of St Mark and the epitaph together celebrate Ferigo's munificence and patriotic altruism, and promote the Corner as peerless statesmen: through the epitaph, Piero Corner lauded his progenitor's role in protecting the Republic against catastrophe during the Genoese war, rhetoric which was felicitously consonant with the image of St Mark, the saint who reputedly protected the Republic against calamities such as foreign invasion.⁶⁹

It was perhaps not coincidental that the name 'Marco' also recalled the Corner family's unique *dogato*, that of Doge Marco Corner (1365-68), whose own tomb in SS Giovanni e Paolo may have initiated a new trend in ostentatious ducal funerary monuments.⁷⁰ Marco Corner was a contemporary of Ferigo and, though not of the Corner-Piscopia line, the two family branches were supposedly derived from a common progenitor and must have been on close terms because of their respective substantial interests in Cyprus.⁷¹ The figure of St Catherine of Alexandria in one of the windows may similarly have alluded to Caterina Corner, Queen of Cyprus, with whom the Saint was traditionally associated. A direct descendent of Doge Marco Corner, Caterina was

⁶⁶ Procurator of St Mark's Giovanni-Battista Corner, seventeenth-century descendent of Ferigo and heir of the palazzo, asserted Ferigo erected the frieze. G.B. Corner, *Informatione sopra il Titolo del Cavalierato di Cipro presero dalla Casa Cornara Episcopia / Suppliche -- Inserte 1680*, BMC, Codice Cicogna, 3417.

Wolters (1976), p. 196, cat. 98, considered a date of 1365 for the frieze acceptable.

⁶⁷ 'La Justitia è à mano drittà; & à mano sinistra sentata sopra due Leoni con la Colonna sopra li Ginocchi è la Fortezza, le quali significano, che mentre la Republica essercitarà la Giustitia, sarà sempre Forte.' Anonymous (Giovanni-Battista Corner?), ASV, Avogaria di Comun, misc. civile e penale, C 73, 1r.

Rosand (1984), p. 178, discusses the conflation of the personification of Justice enthroned on the *Sedes Sapientes* with that of *Venetia*, an iconography developed from the mid-fourteenth century.

⁶⁸ ASV, Avogaria di Comun, misc. civile e penale, C 73, 1r.

⁶⁹ Titian's *St Mark* altarpiece (S. Maria della Salute, Venice) was probably made in the aftermath of the devastating plague of 1510. Augusti in Valcanover et al (1990), p. 151. On the other hand, Giovanni Martini's *St Mark Enthroned with Saints* (1500, Cathedral, Udine) was conceived in order to help ward off a possible Turkish invasion. Gentili (1996), pp. 303-4 and p. 311 n.3.

⁷⁰ Pincus (1981), pp. 129-30.

⁷¹ The genealogy in Berrutti (1952) is not wholly reliable, as there are several errors concerning Piero's branch of the family. In any case, because of the paucity of records, genealogies are inevitably less reliable when extending back to before the fourteenth century.

famously betrothed to the King of Cyprus and embarked for the island in September 1472 when the Corner Chapel was nearing completion.⁷² This event was interpreted in the chronicle of Malipiero as fortuitous, not only in eventually bringing the island under Venetian dominion, but also in satisfying the general Venetian patriciate in their desire to seem more feudally aristocratic by virtue of royal association:

This marriage...made the reputation of the Venetian nobility, having a crowned king ask for his wife the daughter of a private Venetian citizen. And it seemed to everyone that the government had acquired a kingdom, as indeed, by the grace of God, happened.⁷³

It is also in a similarly aristocratic vein that the epitaph in the Frari chapel commences, by praising the illustrious Corner lineage and the enormity of Ferigo's wealth (...Federico Cornaro / famous for the great splendour / of his wealth, of his lineage...) – however, these attributes are justified and presented in acceptably republican terms, through allusion to Ferigo's modesty, sense of justice and the love the people bore for him (For his modesty and / his fairness, he was greatly praised. / His death brought great sorrow to all). Above all, Ferigo's worthiness as a statesman is emphasised by the commemoration of his patriotic and pious donation of his fortune to save the populace from starvation (...during the Genoese war / [he] came to the aid of his famished country / using his affluence with generosity and piety ... for the country's need / ... in the service of God.).

Turning to consider other aspects of the central panel, it is worth noting how the artist juxtaposed the Saint's rough, weathered face with the smooth creamy complexion of the angels, using physiognomic contrast to heighten visual interest. The attractive device of the musical angels also provided visual interest in the lower half of the altarpiece. Exceptional in Bartolomeo's oeuvre, the angels were probably suggested by the cenotaph angel and the *putti* of the fresco, and their inclusion helped to thematically unite the important decorative elements in the chapel. The distribution of the group of angels around St Mark's throne, with the foreground angels playing instruments and those in the background singing, is very close to the equivalent group in the central

⁷² Berruti (1952), genealogy.

⁷³ 'Questo matrimonio...messe in reputation la Nobilità Venetiana; habbiando un re de corona domandà per mogier una fia d'un privato cittadin Venetian; e pareva a ogn'un che la Signoria havesse aquistò un regno, come, per gratia de Dio, successe.' Malipiero, 'Annali Veneti', *Archivio storico Italiano*, VIII, part 2, p. 598.

panel of Mantegna's *San Zeno Altarpiece* (fig. 3.23); 1456-59, San Zeno, Verona). Iconographically, the angels serve to confirm St Mark's presence in Heaven, and the heavenly reference also carried an appropriately proleptic message in the context of a funerary chapel. Further, Humfrey has observed the liturgical significance of this motif, noting that the rite of the Eucharist saw the conjunction of earthly and celestial congregations around the altar.⁷⁴

St Mark's throne quotes the general form of the cenotaph tabernacle and elaborates its decorative motifs, its fresco cornice and the *bas relief* frieze. But in its exuberant detailing, the throne is emphatically more Venetian (or Lombardesque) than Paduan in style, being closely related to Antonio Rizzo's *St James* and *St Paul* altars at San Marco (figs. 3.15-3.16; 1465-69, *in situ*). For example, the *putti* of the St Mark panel resemble their equivalents on Rizzo's altars rather than those of the cenotaph fresco. Citing Rizzo, Bartolomeo demonstrated his *bravura* in creating trompe l'oeil effects and, as if to declare painting's superior mimetic qualities, contrasted the lively carving of inert stone of the altar-throne with the altogether more 'real' saint and *putti*. Where Rizzo installed relatively diminutive figures of the dedicatory saints in the altar niches, Bartolomeo forcefully described the Evangelist, large in scale, strongly modelled and highly coloured. It is as though St Mark were a miraculous apparition upon an altar carved by Rizzo – a clever and fitting conceit for a painted altarpiece and which Bartolomeo had already employed as early as 1465 with the *Naples Altarpiece* (fig. 7.13). This is not to suggest that these works necessarily amount to a self-conscious rehearsal of the *paragone* – there is no evidence to suggest Bartolomeo was an intellectualising artist – and it seems likely that the artist's sculptural mimesis derived from his direct engagement with sculpture and his detailed knowledge of the work of Mantegna and Pizzolo at the Ovetari chapel.

§

The composition of the *St Mark Triptych* is clearly derived from the main panels of Mantegna's *San Zeno Altarpiece* (figs. 3.23-3.24) commissioned by Venetian patrician Giorgio Correr, for the high altar of San Zeno in Verona where he was abbot. To be sure, the composition of the smaller *St Mark Triptych* was necessarily simplified, the

⁷⁴ Humfrey (1993), p. 76.

outer pair of saints have been eliminated from the side panels, and no attempt made to recreate the prodigious architectonic setting of Mantegna's work. However, like the *San Zeno Altarpiece*, the figures in Bartolomeo's triptych occupy a continuous field broken only by the shafts of the frame, and the main group recedes in space, with the Patriarchs aligned on the same plane as St Mark. But where Mantegna used fictive architecture to deepen the effect of recession, Bartolomeo compressed the space, and the graduated crepuscular blue of the background pushes the figures towards the pictorial surface, thereby relating (comparing) them to the sculpted angel in the tabernacle niche, likewise set against a blue ground.

The composition of the side panels also contributes to the strong iconographic and formal symmetry of the altarpiece: typologically similar, Doctors of the church Jerome and Augustine, form an inner pair and Saints John the Baptist and Evangelist the outer pair.⁷⁵ Although the Evangelist figure has been variously identified, his identity is confirmed through comparison with the depiction of John the Evangelist from the Ovetari vault (figs. 3.25-3.26); in both cases the saint was depicted as an elderly man with receding long, grizzled hair and beard, curled moustache and prominent Roman nose with pronounced nostrils.

Piero Corner probably intended both Saints John in the altarpiece as namesake-saints of his father Zuane: the cenotaph inscription – 'EIVS POSTERIS IOANNES FI. / HOC SACELLVM DICAVIT' (To him and to his heirs, his son Giovanni dedicated this chapel.) – served to commemorate Zuane as founder of the chapel, and also implicitly associated him with the Saints John depicted in the altarpiece. St John the Evangelist is fittingly depicted as an elderly man reading from a precious volume, perhaps an allusion to the long-lived Zuane's humanist pursuits and his important and renowned library which was 'particularly remarkable for the elegance of its manuscripts'.⁷⁶ In the absence of any instructions as to burial arrangements in Zuane's will, it is reasonable to assume he was interred here in the family vault. It was not unusual for burial arrangements to be left for testators' heirs to organise as they saw fit, and the practice of collective interment persisted even amongst the

⁷⁵ See Humfrey (1993), p. 355, no. 77, on the identity of the elderly bearded saint as St John the Evangelist in Sebastiano's altarpiece made for S. Giovanni in Crisostomo, Venice; here the Evangelist was included in a trio of Saints John with the Baptist and St John Chrysostom.

⁷⁶ M. King (1986), p. 8, also p. 283 and p. 355. See Billanovich (1962), p. 134, on two manuscripts commissioned by Zuane now at the Ambrosiana, one of which was Giovanni's reconstruction of Cicero's *De oratore* and *Orator* which predates the discovery of the complete Lodi.

wealthiest members of society;⁷⁷ Corner family will certainly demonstrate that a number of family members would be buried in the chapel in the later fifteenth century.

The Baptist's cross and banderol, bearing the legend 'ECCE AGNV...', are consonant with the Eucharistic symbols of the Lamb of God described on the front of the chapel altar and the grapevine about the floor tomb. The figure of the Baptist was also appropriate for the funerary function of the chapel in recalling the hope of Christian salvation and bodily resurrection afforded through the sacrament of Baptism. According to St Paul, through this rite the neophyte symbolically re-enacted Christ's death and resurrection:

Know you not that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. (Romans 6: 3-4)

In both posture and scrawny verisimilitude, Donatello's *John the Baptist* (fig. 1.09; 1438, Frari), produced for the Florentine confraternity based at the Frari, had closely informed Bartolomeo's description of the ascetic Saint in the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna*; but the Baptist of the Corner altarpiece is altogether more classically contrived – his relatively solid physique does not suggest a meagre diet of locusts and honey, his garments are aesthetically draped as though about a classical statue, and his hair is arranged in sculpted curls – only a hint of grotesque verisimilitude is seen in the calloused right foot protruding towards the picture plane. Bartolomeo's rejection of Donatello's *John the Baptist* as a model for the figure in the Corner altarpiece may be explained by a natural reluctance to be seen to borrow artistic sources so obviously, and, more significantly, also signals the evolution of a more classicised figure style in the artist's work (discussed further below).

The church fathers Jerome and Augustine were not onomastic saints of senior or recently deceased family members and may have been included in the altarpiece to convey intellectual substance or religious probity, values with which the Corner family apparently wished to be associated. The viewer is perhaps invited to associate Ferigo Corner's virtues as recalled in the epitaph – TVM DIVINIS / REBVS MAGNIFICE PIEQ. SEMPER / IMPERTIIT⁷⁸ – with Augustine's fame as a Christian philosopher and

⁷⁷ On funerary arrangements in the Veneto in this period see Grubb (1996), pp. 68-71.

⁷⁸ 'Moreover, he always imparted things divine and pious magnificently.'

Jerome's as rhetorician. The representation of St Jerome also demonstrates Bartolomeo's close attention to the suitable depiction of saints in altarpieces made for prestigious local clients. It is fitting that St Jerome was depicted for the scholarly Corner family as a Doctor and, conversely, in the so-called *Lussingrande Altarpiece* of the following year (fig. 0.14) Jerome appears as hermit, consonant with the eremitic values of the commissioners, the Carthusian house near Padua. By contrast, certain of Bartolomeo's altarpieces destined for distant export betray the workshop's mechanical reproduction of standard saintly types.

The building proffered by the Corner St Jerome is appropriately a chapel rather than a church (as indicated by the large scale of the portal in relation to its façade), but it is as though the chapel were remodelled in the renaissance idiom, and its form playfully echoes that of the cenotaph and Saint Mark's throne. The 'remodelling' of St Jerome's chapel in a renaissance idiom reflects the exciting transition now underway in Venetian architecture, which saw renaissance forms taking over from the long-established traditional Venetian gothic; the new style was initiated in Venetian ecclesiastical architecture by Codussi's reconstruction of San Michele in Isola (begun 1468) where, in fact, Piero Corner had installed his own tomb.⁷⁹ The superfluous repetition of the figure of St Jerome in the windows of the apse of the Corner chapel demonstrates that the subtle iconographic dialogue discernable between cenotaph and altarpiece is not replicated between the altarpiece and windows. The designer of the windows' hagiography also omitted St Ambrose, thereby neglecting to properly arrange the Four Doctors between the windows and altarpiece. This seemingly less thoughtful approach to the iconography of the windows may indicate that neither Piero Corner nor Bartolomeo were involved in this phase of the chapel's decoration. It is, indeed, Augusti's hypothesis that the windows were installed well before the altarpiece, soon after the construction of the chapel.⁸⁰

On the other hand, the omission of St Peter from the altarpiece appears deliberate, being consistent with Piero's decision to be interred away from the family chapel in his tomb at San Michele in Isola, as well as his self-effacing modesty, which is demonstrated by the

⁷⁹ '...dapuo la mia morte fazino star el mio corpo sopra terra tanto chel se possi haver ogni forma certa de la mia morte, Et da poy fazino portar quello a San Michel de Muran ve la sepoltura la qual ho fato far per mia moier et per mi...', appendix 7. Today there is no trace of the tomb at San Michele. The church of San Michele was inaugurated in 1477.

⁸⁰ Augusti (1996), p. 320.

absence of his own name from the chapel inscription and the low-key funeral he planned for himself.⁸¹ If Piero had magnificently furnished his forebears' funerary chapel in a manner consonant with an aggrandising tendency amongst the Venetian elite, for his own obsequies he followed the strong counter trend, planning a funeral 'without any pomp...' and excusing his co-brethren of the Scuola Grande di San Marco the trouble of participating in his cortège.⁸²

The notable absence of Franciscan saints in the chapel iconography could be explained by Piero's apparent antipathy towards the institution of the Frari. His aloofness may be discerned in his choice of burial away from the Frari chapel, his lack of instructions for any prayers or masses for his own soul in the family chapel, and his pointed omission of the Frari from the numerous pious donations in his will. He excluded the conventual Franciscan house not only from a list of named religious convents and charities, but also from a more general distribution where he explicitly disqualified non-observant and affluent houses:

I further will that [my executors] give, or have given, to all the observant monasteries of this land and Murano, be they [houses] of friars or nuns, in addition to those nominated above, two ducats each... I do not intend to include rich abbeys in this number, for they have no need of alms⁸³

Piero's antipathy or indifference towards the Frari is striking given his family's previous close connections with the conventual church, and may have been provoked by his father's legal disputes with the Frari over building of the family chapel half-a-century earlier; alternatively, given Piero's preference for observant houses, he may have disapproved of the friars' record of moral laxity – in 1423 the Council of Ten had uncovered illicit behaviour at the Frari including acts of sodomy, sexual misconduct with the nuns of S. Chiara, and an heretical sacrifice in which an image of Christ was trampled underfoot.⁸⁴

The importance of the altarpiece frame to the integrity of both the iconographic programme, the formal design of Bartolomeo's altarpieces, and the physical

⁸¹ See above and appendix 7 for Piero's burial arrangements.

⁸² 'senza alchuna pompa...' '... voio chel sia pregado ch' el guardian et compagni officiali de la Schuola Miser San Marco ... non se fadigano, ne facino fadigar la schuola in acompagnar el mio corpo ala sepoltura', appendix 7. On the prevailing tendencies, see Grubb (1996), pp. 68-70.

⁸³ 'Voio anchora che diano o fazino dar a tuti i monasteri de osservanza se de frati come de munege de questa terra e de Muran oltra i nominadi de sopra ducati do per chadauno...Non Intendendo in questo numero Abbatie riche perche queste non hano bixogno de elimoxine', appendix 7.

⁸⁴ Cited Palmer (1978), p. 292.

environment in which the works were set, can best be appreciated with the *St Mark* and *Ca' Bernardo* altarpieces at the Frari. It has already been noted above that figurative components forming the pinnacles of the frame contributed Christological references in the altarpiece, and it may be added that the other figurative elements – the sacred flame and the acolytes surmounting the outer and intermediate pilasters respectively – befitted its funerary purpose. The acolytes appear to have originally held censers as an allusion to the efficacy of masses and prayers made on behalf of the dead; perfumed smoke given off by the censer was said to represent prayers rising to heaven.

As certain elements in the painted panels played with forms and motifs of the cenotaph, so the polygonal pilasters and crocketed ogees of the altarpiece echoed the equivalent components of the chapel's external portal. But the dynamic, opulent frame contrasts markedly with the simple lines of the chapel's interior: its broad ogees diverge from the simple lancet form of the chapel windows, and its gables are elaborately shaped and crested with extravagant foliate crockets, and all surfaces are enlivened with complex flowing tracery. As Humfrey has observed, the frame helps reconcile the renaissance components of the chapel (including Bartolomeo's painted panels) with its gothic architectonic form to create an 'aesthetic unity that remains impressively vital'.⁸⁵ It is unclear whether this effect was calculated or whether it was a felicitous consequence of stylistic transition or a contemporary appreciation of stylistic heterogeneity. Similar questions may be raised about other works of the period, such as the arcade between choir and ambulatory in the church of S. Zaccaria (c. 1460-90) where gothic and renaissance styles coexist, the lower (and necessarily earlier) order being classical, and the upper, gothic.

In producing the *St Mark Triptych*, Bartolomeo apparently collaborated with a frame-maker who had worked with the Vivarini for over two decades. The frame of the *St Mark Triptych* shares similarities with that of the Vivarini brothers' *Certosa Polyptych* (fig. 0.01) and particularly with the frame of the *Polyptych of the Madonna* as it was recorded by Sasso (fig. 1.02); over the course of twenty-four years' collaboration the carver's style had become bolder and more dramatic. The frames of the *St Mark* and *Madonna* altarpieces share a number of motifs, including: pinnacles comprising carved prophets with banderols; foliate crockets emerging from the gables; minutely traced, polygonal piers; and *predelle* decorated with geometrical tracery which in both cases

⁸⁵ Humfrey (1993), p. 171.

includes a motif of interlocking circles. Augusti's assertion that the altarpiece frame is contemporaneous with the portal lunette and that Bartolomeo painted the altarpiece panels decades later to fill its voids therefore seems unfounded.⁸⁶

Both Frari altarpieces demonstrate Bartolomeo's sensitivity to the lighting and spatial conditions of the ambient in which his altarpieces would be situated. The *St Mark Triptych* fits snugly into the chapel's apse recess, spanning the breadth of the central pair of lancets, its robust outer polygonal shafts aligned with the compound piers of the apse. The altarpiece, though splendidly eye-catching, is scaled so that it does not overwhelm the space it occupies, being pleasingly proportioned to the depth of the chapel and the height of its vault. The decorous dimensions of the *St Mark Triptych* may be contrasted with the oppressive monumentality of Alvise Vivarini's *St Ambrose Altarpiece* (fig. 5.19; 1503, completed by Marco Basaiti) in the adjacent Milanese chapel.

The palette of the *St Mark Triptych* was calculated to the particular lighting difficulties of the Corner chapel. Today these are largely eliminated by the use of artificial illumination directed on the altarpiece, and by the lower tier of dense modern coloured glass which provides an almost opaque backdrop to the upper section of the altarpiece. But previously, the images depicted in the altarpiece could have been obliterated by bright sunlight entering through the glass-filled apse; the oculus on the opposite wall is set too high to illuminate the altar effectively. Bartolomeo dealt with this difficulty by adopting a luminescent palette which would make the most of any light from candles or lamps set before the altar. To render the figures legible, the artist set them against a dark ground, employed vivid colours in their garments, and modelled with intense contrast between highlight and shadow.

Excepting the sometimes crude works evidently produced by Bartolomeo's studio collaborators, two stylistic tendencies (sometimes mutually exclusive) can be perceived in Bartolomeo's oeuvre, aspects of which may be seen in the *St Mark Triptych*. The beginnings of an increasingly monumental renaissance figure style may be perceived by comparing the figures of the triptych to the male saints of the *Polyptych of the Madonna*; the figures in the triptych are already more substantial, muscular and classically proportioned, as was noted above in the case of the *Baptist*. In some

⁸⁶ Augusti (1996), p. 320.

contemporaneous works Bartolomeo employed an elaborate decorative idiom, characterised by quirky stylisation of hair, costume, physiognomy and stance – this style, which responds, not altogether successfully, to the decorative and lush idiosyncrasies of contemporary artists such as Carlo Crivelli, is employed in the *Naples Altarpiece* (fig. 7.13; 1465) and is particularly pronounced in the *Lussingrande Altarpiece* (fig. 0.14; 1475). Traces of this style may be perceived in the drawing of the hair, retroussé nose and balletic posture of the figure of the Baptist in the *St Mark Triptych*.

The Early Reception of the *St Mark Triptych*

Before closing, a few remarks should be made about the early reception of the *St Mark Triptych*. Given its extraordinary, striking palette, its superb quality and its prestigious (albeit restricted) location, on installation in 1474 the *St Mark Triptych* must have reinforced Bartolomeo's good reputation amongst his colleagues and attracted the attention of potential customers. Most notably, a few years later the Bernardo family would commission Bartolomeo to produce the altarpiece for their recently 'acquired' Frari chapel; the Bernardo did not apparently share the *scuola* or parish ties with Bartolomeo which may have helped him gain the Diedo, Dolfen, Corner and Santa Maria Formosa contracts.

As for his standing amongst his colleagues, it is evident Bartolomeo's presentation of St Mark provided an iconographically and formally satisfying solution to the problem of depicting a male saint as the central subject in an essentially iconic altarpiece. St Mark's very traditional pose made fitting hieratic and Christological allusions, but also engaged the saint with a suppliant before the altar, unlike other more naturalistic depictions of male saints, where the subject was often shown in the act of reading or writing, as in Mantegna's *St Luke Polyptych* (1455, Brera, Milan), Sebastiano's *St John Chrysostom Altarpiece* (1506, S. Giovanni Crisostomo, Venice) and Giovanni Bellini's *Derelitti Altarpiece* in the same church (1513). In their main subject's naturalistic detachment, they do not 'respond' to the supplications of a worshipper, such that both Bellini and Sebastiano turned one or more of the flanking saints outwards in order to draw the viewer in. Lazzaro Bastiani looked to Bartolomeo's *St Mark* for his depiction of Saint Anthony in *St Anthony of Padua with Saints Bonaventure and the Blessed Luca Belludi* (fig. 3.27; c. 1480, Accademia, Venice), which originally adorned the altar of St

Anthony of the eponymous *scuola* at the Frari.⁸⁷ And, without suggesting that Bartolomeo was an important influence on the early style of Titian, it is fair to observe his *St Mark* was known to the sixteenth-century master who employed the commanding pose, naturalistically loosened and in slight *contraposto*, for the figure of St Peter in his early *Jacopo Pesaro presented to St. Peter by Pope Alexander VI* (c. 1503-7(?), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp). The Corner triptych also informed Titian's *St Mark Altarpiece* (fig. 3.28; c. 1511, S. Maria della Salute, Venice) the subject of which, in its depiction of the Evangelist enthroned with four male saints, was essentially similar to the Corner chapel altarpiece, albeit rearranged in the triangular composition of the prevailing *sacra conversazione* format. Whilst Titian rendered the Saint more naturalistically, afforded him a more commanding position above the other saints, and stripped the work of all extraneous detail, the programme is essentially that of the *St Mark Triptych* by Bartolomeo.

§

It has been argued here that the *St Mark Triptych* was commissioned in 1473 by Piero Corner in order to splendidly furnish the altar in the family chapel, which was desired a century earlier by Piero's illustrious and wealthy grandfather Ferigo and was erected by his father Zuane. As the last of his generation, Piero inherited the task of completing the chapel which he saw as an imperative of filial duty, harbouring no personal desire for burial there, nor having a particular regard for the conventual Franciscan setting. Accordingly, the iconography of the altarpiece represents two namesake-saints of Piero's father Zuane, two patriarchs who might allude to Zuane's erudition, but no St Peter nor, remarkably, any Franciscan saint. The authoritative depiction of St Mark in the altarpiece reflects the patrician Corner family's identification with the Venetian State, complementary to the patriotic deeds and virtues explicitly recorded in the cenotaph eulogy, and may also allude to the commissioner's membership of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, the prestigious confraternity where he would have become acquainted with the artist he employed. Bartolomeo's magnificent altarpiece befitted the important commission and, though it outshone the other decorative elements in the

⁸⁷ On the original location of the *St Anthony* altarpiece see Humfrey (1993), p. 347, no. 32. It has been argued elsewhere that the work was instead made for the *albergo* of the *Scuola*. L. Sartor, *Arte Veneta*, 50, p. 44.

chapel, the altarpiece was designed to harmonise with these in colour, motif and form as well as complement the architectonic features and space of the chapel.

The splendour of the Corner chapel and its various iconographic elements also serves to exemplify how the Venetian ruling class was evolving into a more 'aristocratic' institution, as well as the way this impulse was yet inhibited by traditional Republican values: the epitaph commences lauding riches and lineage, but it subsequently emphasises Ferigo Corner's patriotic charity and modesty; and although, in the Venetian context, the cenotaph is a particularly conspicuous funerary monument dedicated to an individual who was neither a military hero nor doge, Ferigo and his heirs were actually buried humbly in a space beneath the pavement. Finally, for all its opulence of form and richness of colour, Bartolomeo's splendid altarpiece excluded donor portraits and even the Corner family arms.

Having examined three altarpieces made for patrician funerary chapels in chapters 1 to 3, chapters 4 to 6 will focus on altarpieces made for three very different Venetian corporations: a wealthy and exclusive clerical confraternity, a trades *scuola* and a religious confraternity associated with the devastating plague of 1478.

The Congregation of Clergy and the *Misericordia Triptych* (1475)

*'Tota pulchra, et formosa es Maria et macula originalis non est in te'*¹

'This very well-conserved altarpiece... gives a good idea of this painter's fine *colorito* and is truly one of his best works, carried out with much love...'.² Zanetti's observation in his 1771 *Pittura Veneziana* on the earliest of Bartolomeo's corporate Venetian altarpieces is telling, for the *Madonna della Misericordia Triptych* (fig. 4.01) made so 'lovingly' was destined for the artist's own parish church, S. Maria Formosa. The triptych panels (tempera on poplar; centre panel 147 x 70 cm; left & right panels 105 x 50 cm) remain in the church, although the original setting has been transformed and the altarpiece frame was replaced in the seventeenth century with a heavy marble cornice. Unusually in Bartolomeo's oeuvre, the side panels of the altarpiece comprise narrative subjects, the Meeting of Joachim and Anne (left) and the Birth of the Virgin (right); in the central panel the *Madonna della Misericordia* (Virgin of Mercy) is depicted sheltering supplicants under her mantle, and the plinth upon which she stands is inscribed:
BARTHOLOMEVS · VIVARINVS · DE / MVRIANO PINXIT · M · CCCCLXXIII[III].³

The *Misericordia Triptych* was made for the altar in the Cappella della Concezione (Chapel of the Conception) under the patronage of the venerable Congregazione del Clero (Congregation of Clergy) at the ancient parish church. The Congregation, which at the time of the altarpiece commission was headed by the artist's parish priest, was one of nine similar Venetian sodalities which comprised mainly clerics and operated under the auspices of the highest ecclesiastical authority in Venice. It will be proposed that the altarpiece represents the Congregation's affirmation of a most controversial doctrinal

¹ *Matricvla...* (1688), p. 8. ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 14 [67-68].

² 'É quest'opera molto ben conservata; e perciò dà una giusta idea del buon colorito di questo Pittore; ed è veramente una delle pitture sue migliori, condotta con molto amore, con sufficiente gusto, ed intelligenza' Zanetti (1972), p. 25.

³ See below regarding the recorded date in the inscription. For full technical details see technical report, see Piovan (1999), p. 28.

position – the Immaculate Conception.

The Commissioning of the Triptych and its Original Form and Context

Correcting a century-old misapprehension on the part of art historians (though not by persons close to the Congregation which remains active today), Sponza recently demonstrated that the triptych was commissioned by the priestly confraternity in 1474.⁴ A contract for the Congregation's altarpiece, dated 1474, was noted in the sodality's eighteenth-century archival register, although the actual contract is lost.⁵ (Despite the work's corporate iconography, Ludwig had asserted that it was painted for the high altar of the parish church, funded by testamentary gifts from various parishioners. In fact, the documents published by Ludwig bear no relation to Bartolomeo's triptych, but rather to the repair of a silver *pala* which graced the high altar and had been damaged in an attempted burglary.⁶)

From documents of 1462 and 1484 amongst others, we learn that Bartolomeo lived in the parish of S. Maria Formosa (fig. 4.02), with the later document citing his residence in the *Bancharia*, a street which has since disappeared from the map.⁷ As a parishioner, Bartolomeo probably enjoyed an advantage over his rivals in gaining the contract – we have already seen how he exploited contacts at the Scuola Grande di San Marco to win business. Bartolomeo would also have had ample opportunity to discuss details with his commissioners, who must have been very familiar figures to him, given that members of

⁴ Sponza (1999). I am very grateful to the late Sandro Sponza for taking the trouble to meet with me on several occasions to discuss his work on the triptych, for copies of his then-unpublished articles and a photograph revealing the over-painted numerals of the inscription.

⁵ The contract is noted in both the index of the register: 'Accordo per la Palla dell'Altare del 1474 ----- car[te] 15 n.o 9' and on the indicated folio: '1474 – N.o 9 / Accordo per far la Palla dell'Altare della Reverenda Congregazione di Santa Maria Formosa ut ibi'. This document was cited by Mussolino (1972), pp. 21-22 and Sponza (1999). ASPV, Congregazione di S. Maria Formosa, b. 13, Catastico, varia, s.n. (68)*, C. 3r., e 15r. n. 9.

* refers to reference numbers in the *Indice Inventario sommario dell'archivio storico delle nove Congregazioni del Clero di Venezia*, G. Bortolan, O. Marchi and S. Tramontin (eds.) Venice (1964). However, the relevant *busta* 13 is now marked '65? (sic) – 66', and the register does not match the description of references 65, 66 or 68.

⁶ Ludwig (1905), pp. 11 ff; Sponza (1999), pp. 22-29; for the silver *pala*, Niero (1972).

⁷ '1462, 8 Januarii – Ego Catherina consors magistri Bartholomei Vivarini pictoris de confinio sancte Marie Formose...'. Cited Ludwig (1905), p. 16; '[1484]...magister Bartholomeus Vivarinus pictor habitator Venetiis in contracta Sancte Marie Formose in bancharia...' Sambin (1964), p. 41.

The *Bancharia* is unmentioned in Tassini's *Curiosità Veneziane*, so was probably demolished or renamed prior to the original publication of that text (1863). See appendix 1 for other documents which similarly show Bartolomeo was resident in the parish.

the parish chapter played an important and often intimate role in the lives of parishioners.⁸ Vettor Rosati, the Congregation's incumbent *arciprete* (archpriest 1458-78?), shown prominently in the centre panel attired in a splendid cope, probably took the lead in the altarpiece commission.⁹ Rosati was Bartolomeo's own parish priest and either he, or another priest of the S. Maria Formosa chapter, would have acted as Bartolomeo's *patrino* (father-confessor), an important figure in the life of an individual.¹⁰

Although the actual altarpiece contract is lost, certain contractual arrangements may be inferred from the circumstances of the commission.¹¹ Firstly, from the 1474 date in the register and the inscribed date of 1475 on the altarpiece (not 1473 as previously believed), it appears Bartolomeo took around a year to complete the work - and certainly no more than two.¹² Further, it is likely the theologically-sophisticated Congregazione prescribed the altarpiece's programme in some detail, as was the case with an altarpiece made for a similar company of priests in Pistoia; the programme of the Pistoia altarpiece was decided in deliberations which took place before an artist was even selected.¹³ Indeed, the narrative-iconic-narrative format and the detailed 'genre' settings of the side panels are so unusual in Bartolomeo oeuvre as to indicate the commissioners' attentive prescriptions.

We can only speculate on the motives of the priestly Congregation at S. Maria Formosa for commissioning a new altarpiece. In the case of the Confraternity of Priests in Pistoia, a handsome new altarpiece was ordered because it would bring 'honour and glory' to the sodality.¹⁴ Despite obvious differences in theological and cultural sophistication, the commissioning pretext of a clerical confraternity could thus seem similar to that of the trade confraternity whose commission will be examined in chapter 5. That delivery of the S.

⁸ D. Romano (1987), pp.96-102.

⁹ For Rosati's period of incumbency see Cappelletti (1853) III, p. 222 and F. Corner (1754), p. 131. Sponza (1999), p. 24, notes 18-20, and p. 26, argues Rosati was actually *arciprete* until 1478, not 1475 as stated by the earlier authors.

¹⁰ Each parishioner had recourse to a *patrino*, usually a priest of the local parish chapter. Although this was intended primarily as a spiritual relationship, *patrini* sometimes became closely connected with their charge and part of their 'fictive kin group'. D. Romano (1987), p. 98.

¹¹ The relevant holdings at the ASPV were evidently thoroughly examined in the process of compilation of the *Indice Inventario*.... There is no mention of any contract in the Index and limited searches of the archive undertaken for the present study have also failed to locate the missing contract.

¹² The frequently-cited date 1473 is incorrect, the final numerals 'II' of the *cartellino* were over-painted in the nineteenth century. Sponza (1999), p. 24 and p. 29 notes 7, 12, 14-17; confirmed with photographic evidence in Sponza (2001), p. 117 and p. 308, fig. 1.

¹³ Rubin (1994), p.204.

¹⁴ Rubin (1994), p.201.

Maria Formosa altarpiece coincided with the Jubilee year of 1475 may be significant;¹⁵ the church of S. Maria Formosa enjoyed local prominence, and the prospect of a Jubilee, perhaps entailing visitations by senior ecclesiasts, could have stimulated the Congregation's desire for an "honourable" altarpiece.

§

Although the triptych remains in the Congregation's chapel, the appearance of its original ambient is unknown, as both church and altar have been radically remodelled since its creation and early commentaries provide few clues. The triptych's original frame was evidently replaced when the altar was renewed in 1666, as recorded in inscriptions in the chapel:

To the right: GASPAR GUZZARDUS/ S. T. D./VIC[ARIA]LIS .S.S. BART. TITULA[RIS]/VENERANDÆ
CONGREG[ATIONIS].HU[IUS].TEMPLII ARCHIPRESBYTER

To the left: DEIPARÆ VIRGINI PROTECTRICI/ ÆERE PROPRIO/ IN HANC FORMAM RESTITUIT / ANNO
DNI MDCLXVI¹⁶

Some observations should be made on the original articulation of the altarpiece and the style of its frame, although it is impossible to arrive at firm conclusions because the format of the surviving elements of the triptych are exceptional in the oeuvre. Whereas Bartolomeo's triptychs usually comprise three panels of similar size, here the iconic central panel is unusually large in comparison with the shorter and narrower narrative side panels, which were originally still shorter, the Meeting having been extended by 10.5 cm and the Birth by 5 cm with the later addition of a strip of wood to the bottom of each, painted in tempera to extend the foreground in the form of a low step.¹⁷ As the present arrangement of the panels seems satisfactory in terms of the alignment of orthogonals, with a vanishing point set behind the Virgin's breast or upper abdomen, it is likely the side panels were set in their current relation to the central panel, leaving

¹⁵ It was in commemoration of this jubilee year that the first edition was published of *Miracoli della Virgine Maria*, L. Achates, Vicenza, (1475). As noted by Chavasse (1996), p.323, n. 22; and p. 331.

¹⁶ Cited in Sponza (1999), p.29, n.3.

'Gaspere Guzzardo, Doctor of Theology, Vicar at San Bartolomeo, Archpriest of the Reverend Congregation named after this Church [which is] dedicated to the Virgin Protector, Mother of God, funded the restoration. AD 1666'

¹⁷ The panels must have been lengthened at the time of installation of the new marble cornice in order to fill the new apertures. On the panel extensions, see Piovan (1999), p. 28.

rectangular voids either side of the base of the central panel, which in the seventeenth-century arrangement were filled by unadorned marble tablets. In the original frame, these rectangular spaces might have accommodated inscriptions commemorating the names of incumbent officers of the Congregation and the *titulus* of the altar, effectively replaced by the 1666 inscription noted above. Alternatively, these spaces might have accommodated a pair of small painted panels depicting the Annunciation, a bi-partite subject ideally suited to the twin voids, and consonant with the subjects of the main panels – although such a formal composition would indeed have been unusual.

Articulated in a different format again, Bartolomeo's *Lehman Ancona* (fig. 4.03; early 1470s?, Lehman Collection, New York), which also includes the motif of the Virgin crowned by angels, includes a bi-partite version of the Annunciation, as well as a paired Nativity and *Pietà*, set either side of the main central panel.

Some twenty years before the *Misericordia Triptych* was installed in its marble cornice, Ridolfi stated it comprised 'three spaces', indicating there were only three painted panels at this date; but as he reported the positions of the Meeting and Birth reversed (with the Meeting to the right of the central panel, unlikely as an original arrangement), the altarpiece may have already been subject to significant intervention and perhaps reduction by the time he saw it.¹⁸

From the mid-late 1470s a number of altarpieces by Bartolomeo were constructed with renaissance-style frames, such as the 1476 *Bari Altarpiece* (fig. 0.15), which comprises a single field with lunette over. Other works, including the *Conversano Polyptych* (fig. 4.04; 1475, Accademia, Venice) retained gothic frames. As far as can be told, it was not until 1477 with the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, perhaps Bartolomeo's first collaborative project with carver Jacopo da Faenza, that he applied a classicising frame to a multi-panelled altarpiece (fig. 5.02). It therefore seems more likely, that the frame of the *Misericordia Triptych* was articulated in the sort of flamboyant gothic style found in the *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.01) which was completed the same year (1474) that Bartolomeo was commissioned by the Congregation. The gothic form is also suggested by details in the painted panels, notably the gothic-arch detail of the footstool and low bench in the birth scene (fig. 4.18); it will be seen in the case of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01) that correspondence between Bartolomeo's painted panels and

¹⁸ 'La quinta [tavola è] in santa Maria Formosa divisa in tre vani, nel destro è l'incontro di Giochino ed Anna, nel sinistro la nascita della Vergine...', Ridolfi (1999), p. 54.

frame could be very close, so that motifs in the painted panels were picked up in the relief carving of the frame. As the painted surface area of the S. Maria Formosa panels follows a round-arch form, it is likely the apertures of the original frame were more rounded than in earlier altarpieces; already in 1474 the aperture arches of the *St Mark Triptych*, although residually an ogee form, were much flatter and rounder, and lacked the pronounced cusping of the apertures of the *St Augustine Polyptych* of the previous year.¹⁹ On the evidence of the *St Mark Triptych* we can surmise that the frame of the *Misericordia* altarpiece was exuberantly carved, and covered almost entirely in gold-leaf, perhaps with some polychrome. It might have been crowned with the familiar motif of carved prophets with banderols, a motif found in the cope of the *arciprete* in the foreground of the central panel; for iconographic consistency, any carved prophets may have been those associated with the Virgin's Immaculacy.²⁰ The apex of the altarpiece would have comprised a carved figure or scene, such as the Crucifixion which graced the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* (fig. 1.02); a crucifix would have introduced an otherwise sparse Christological and Eucharistic element to the triptych, resolved iconographically in the Resurrection 'embroidered' on the *arciprete's* cope. Alternatively, an Annunciate Virgin, as crowns the *St Mark Triptych*, would have referenced the Marian themes of the main panels. Finally, the *predella* was most likely to have been carved with decorative low relief, perhaps punctuated with corporate motifs or the insignia of important donors, in the way the *predella* of the 1482 *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* comprises family arms and roundels with saints.

The S. Maria Formosa Congregation and the cult of the *Immacolata*

Before examining the altarpiece programme and considering how it may have been devised by the commissioning sodality, it is necessary to outline the form and practices of the exclusive and wealthy Congregations of Clergy which have received scant attention from Anglophone scholars.²¹ One tradition has it that canonised Doge Pietro Orseolo I instituted the Nine Congregations in the tenth century;²² and another that they were founded in the

¹⁹ See chapter 2 on the evidence for the lost frame of the *St Augustine Polyptych*.

²⁰ The relevance of the iconography of the main panels to the Immaculate Conception is discussed below. See Barbieri (1993) on the use of prophets and doctors of the church in the context of the Immaculate Conception.

²¹ For the *Nove Congregazioni del Clero* see: Cappelletti (1853) and Musolino (1972); although old-fashioned, Betto's texts (1984 and 1989) provide the most recent and thorough accounts of the *Congregazioni*.

²² Betto (1989), pp. 113-15.

twelfth century as affirmed in the 1643 *mariegola* (capitulary) of the S. Maria Formosa Congregation, which ‘records’ its inception in A. D. 1145 under the title of the ‘Conception of the Most Holy Virgin Mary’.²³ Such traditions no doubt enhanced the venerability of the ‘Reverend Congregations’, for which actual origins and founding purposes remain unclear.²⁴ Devotion to a particular cult did not evidently motivate their inception, as Congregations were apparently named after the *tituli* of their respective host churches.²⁵

Like other confraternities, the Congregations used a chapel and burial ground at their host church, and brethren were bound to comfort their sick, bury their dead and pray for the souls of their deceased. And the Congregations’ *mariegole*, amended and replaced from time to time as necessary, defined their form and scope, the election and duties of officers and members, the form of religious meetings and so forth. But the Congregations may be distinguished from other Venetian *scuole* in a number of important ways: most significantly, the membership comprised mainly clerics, including senior ecclesiasts; although a few lay people were also admitted, this was strictly limited on an invitation-only basis.²⁶ Where other confraternities usually confined suffrage of the dead to the membership and their families, the Congregations functioned as pious advocates for the souls of Venice, for which they benefited from numerous testamentary bequests, rather as did convents and monasteries. In exchange for testamentary donations, they attended funeral processions and performed prayers and masses for benefactors’ souls.²⁷ Through the bequests the Congregations grew wealthy;²⁸ for example, an early sixteenth-century record from the archive of the S. Maria Formosa Congregation concerns ‘houses in the Castello [district]’, bequeathed in return for ‘a chantry in perpetuity, and two commemorative masses per Annum...’ and other records relate to a villa and land in the

²³ ‘De Solemnitate Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae, Sub cuius titula de anno Nativitatis Dominicae 1145 Errecta fuit Congregatio Praedictae’. *Matricvla...* Venice (1643), p. 8. Martinioni affirmed that the four oldest Congregations were founded in 1145. Martinioni in Sansovino (1998), p. 404.

²⁴ Noting that each Congregation was based in a Venetian church under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Grado or linked to Benedictine houses of the Cluniac rule, Betto hypothesised that clerics formed sodalities with the aim of fostering spiritual renewal, based on the rigours of Benedictine spirituality. Betto (1989), pp. 116-18.

²⁵ Betto (1989), p. 116.

²⁶ Betto (1984), pp.166-67 and pp.198-200. Betto (1989), pp.134-35, estimated that some 400 members were enrolled in the nine Congregations.

²⁷ Betto (1989), pp.122-23. See Sansovino and Martinioni for a description of the funerary processions in which the Congregations participated. Sansovino (1998), pp. 403-4.

²⁸ Martinioni referred to ‘case e possessioni’ in several areas of the city bearing the insignia of the various Congregations; he also noted the Congregations acted as testamentary trustees. Martinioni, in Sansovino (1998), p. 404.

terraferma.²⁹

As with all Venetian *scuole*, the Council of Ten presided over the Congregations, but in practice the secular authority did not intervene in their affairs, for they were governed by their 'Collegio', which comprised representatives from each Congregation and reported directly to the Bishop (later the Patriarch) of Castello.³⁰ The ecclesiastical governance of the Congregations had been formalised under the bishopric of the saintly Lorenzo Giustiniani, a close associate of Pope Eugenio IV and the first patriarch of Venice (fig. 4.05).³¹ Giustiniani strongly influenced local piety, including, it is thought, religious imagery as well as monastic and ecclesiastical reform.³² He dominated the Congregations from 1433 until his death in 1456, gradually increasing the supervisory authority of the patriarch.³³ When the *Misericordia Triptych* was installed, the incumbent patriarch was Maffeo Girardi (1466-92). Described as similar to Giustiniani in approach, Girardi drew the *Congregazioni* further under his control.³⁴

The Congregations were closely associated and identified with the chapter and devotional life of their host churches; for instance, it was not unusual for the incumbent parish priest to also be appointed as the Congregation's *arciprete*, and the congregations assumed the *titulus* of the church where they were based. The S. Maria Formosa Congregation was not only eponymous with its host church, an important traditional centre of Marian devotion, but was likewise originally dedicated to the Virgin's Purification.³⁵ The actual name of the church (and thus the Congregation) had originated in St Magnus' vision of a *formosa* (beautiful) Virgin Mary which supposedly inspired the foundation of the church in the

²⁹ 'case in Castello...una Mansionaria perpetua, e due essequii all'Anno-' ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 13, 16v and 86r.

³⁰ Betto (1989), pp. 126-28.

³¹ Giustiniani and Gabriele Condulmer (Pope Eugenio IV), were *confrères* at the religious community of San Giorgio in Alga. For a recent biography of Giustiniani see Cracco's introduction (1982) to the facsimile edition of *Sancti Laurentii Justiniani: Opera Omnia* (1751); for his influence on the *Nove Congregazioni del Clero* see Betto (1984). An early biography was written by Giustiniani's nephew, Bernardo, of which there are various editions including Padre Gio. Pietro Maffei's Italian edition (1819).

³² Giustiniani's influence on religious imagery is observed by Goffen (1986a), p. 79. See, for example, Cracco (1982) p. 17, for his effect on the reform movement.

³³ Giustiniani issued the Congregazioni with *sentenze arbitrali* in 1433, 1448 and 1453-54. The first imposed the statutory framework of the Congregazioni and the Collegio, whilst that of 1448 reinforced the bishop's supervisory role. Betto (1989), pp. 127-28.

³⁴ Betto (1989), p. 130 and p. 132.

³⁵ The church of S. Maria Formosa was reputedly the first dedicated to the Virgin in metropolitan Venice (seventh-century Torcello cathedral was similarly dedicated). S. Maria Formosa was the *locus* of the ancient *fešta delle Marie* which included a ducal procession to the church on February 1 (eve of the Feast), after which mass was performed and the priest presented the Doge with gifts on behalf of the people. The *fešta* was officially abolished in 1379, but continued in a scaled-down form thereafter. Sansovino (1998), p. 492. For a discussion of the festivities and their significance, see Muir (1981), chapter 4.

seventh century.³⁶ The legend is recalled in the eighteenth-century high altarpiece which takes St Magnus' apparition as its subject (Giulia Lama, c. 1720), to which St Mark and Venetia are also witnesses, perhaps indicating the civic role of the ancient church and its resident Congregation.³⁷ It is an indication of the propinquity of the church and its Congregation, that the Virgin is here revealed as the *Immacolata* to whom the Congregation was by now dedicated, elevated on a cloud with an aureole of stars about her head.

However, the Virgin's Conception is unmentioned in the Congregation's 1405-7 *mariegola*, whilst its fourteenth-century *proemio* refers simply to the Congregation 'united in the honour and reverence of the omnipotent God and his mother the most glorious and holy Virgin Mary, under whose name the congregation would meet'.³⁸ The Congregation held a special meeting on the unspecified 'feast of the blessed Virgin'—which was then presumably the Purification.³⁹ It seems the Congregation adopted the cult of the *Immacolata* during the 1470s as a statute in its *Summarium... Statutorum*, dating from before 1478, stipulates December 8 – traditionally the feast of the Virgin's Conception – as the occasion of certain obligations;⁴⁰ and a passage from the same manuscript dated 1507 states categorically: 'the Conception of glorious Virgin Mary...is the principal feast of our Reverend Congregation'.⁴¹ It will be argued below that the iconography of Bartolomeo's 1475 triptych – installed the year prior to the issue of the bull *Cum praeclsa* – commended the Immaculate Conception, and marked the occasion of the Congregation's espousal of the cult at a time when discussion of the origins and significance of the Virgin's immaculacy was inflamed.

³⁶ *Chiesa di Santa Maria Formosa*, anonymous, foreword by A. Trucolo (1994), p.7.

³⁷ *Chiesa di Santa Maria Formosa*, p.15. The anonymous author notes that the work by Lama replaced a lost *Assunta* by Jacopo Tintoretto (an iconography associated with the *Immacolata*, see below); the author implies the subject of Lama's altarpiece is also the *Assunta*.

³⁸ Betto (1984), p. 44 and p. 347.

³⁹ Listed together with other holy feasts are: '... festis beate Virginis....et Assumptionis Virginis', *Mariegola* 4, V, reproduced in Betto (1984), p. 349. See p. 162 and *Mariegola* 4, I, regarding the meeting on the Calends of S. Maria Formosa.

⁴⁰ Summary of regulations 1414 –1519, entitled: *Summarium quoddam et Repertorium omnium Statutorum ac partium quae continentur tam in matricula nostre Congregationis Dive (sic) Marie Formose, quam etiam in Libro Partium*. ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, *Summarium...* b. 14, (67).

See also Betto (1984), pp.44-46.

⁴¹ '...in vigilia Conceptionis gloriose virginis marie Que dicte nostre Venerande Congregationis festum est principale'. ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, *Summarium...* b. 14, (67) 9v. Cited Betto (1984), pp. 44-46

Immaculists, most prominently Franciscan Observants, declared the Virgin free from original sin at the moment of her conception, which some argued was necessarily miraculous, rather than carnal, implicating the Holy Spirit's intervention on St Anne's womb. On the other hand, Maculists, including the Dominicans after Thomas Aquinas, believed Mary was conceived naturally in sin but was subsequently sanctified in the womb. Between these poles lay a range of subtly differentiated theological positions. Pope Felix V declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception at the Council of Basel in 1439, although its acceptance was not universal due to the invalidation of the Council. In 1476, Sixtus IV issued the bull which officially adopted the feast for the entire Latin church, confirmed the feast day of December 8 and granted associated indulgences; the Franciscan Pope also commissioned an office for the feast, first published in Venice in 1478. Notwithstanding the Pope's public endorsement, the doctrine would remain controversial.⁴²

Betto found no precise motive for the S. Maria Formosa Congregation's espousal of the cult in the later *quattrocento*, aside from the general religious climate, and the favourable position adopted by certain influential senior ecclesiasts.⁴³ Sixtus IV indeed had significant Venetian sympathies and connections;⁴⁴ at the time the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was declared and subsequently nullified, the future pope was resident in Venice, occupying the 'Marian Chair' at the Frari *studio* (1439-41), an institution engaged in promulgating the cause.⁴⁵ During his Venetian sojourn, the future Pope was surely acquainted with Lorenzo Giustiniani, the case for whose canonisation he would later consider.⁴⁶

Giustiniani, as noted above, was the *de facto* head of the Congregations until his death in 1456, and was thus in a prime position to influence their theological positions and devotional practices; he is indeed reputed a 'strenuous promulgator' of the Immaculate

⁴² On the controversy of the Immaculate Conception see, for example, Holweck (2003). The text of the office was ostensibly composed by Leonardo Nogarolis, though Ettlinger (1979), p. 63 and n. 46, suggested Sixtus IV may have written or contributed to it. The doctrine remained so controversial that it was not pronounced dogma until 1854.

⁴³ Betto (1984), p. 46.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Labalme (1993) pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵ 'cattedra sul privilegio mariano'. Gatti (1992), p. 64. See also above regarding the establishment at the Frari of *Scuole* to the *Concezione*.

⁴⁶ See 'Relazione degli Atti per la Conanizzazione di S. Lorenzo' in Maffei (1819); Labalme (1993), pp. 21-23.

Conception.⁴⁷ In his sermon for the Feast of the Purification, he stated Mary, whose ‘flesh [was] incorrupt’, had no need to undergo the rite, but in humility subjected herself to prevailing law.⁴⁸ With good reason, this has been interpreted as indicative of Giustiniani’s favourable stance on the Immaculate Conception, for the superfluity of her purification was a key point of an important thirteenth-century defence of the Immaculist position.⁴⁹ Giustiniani must have had occasion to deliver this sermon at S. Maria Formosa, given this prominent church was dedicated to the Purification. In the sermon for the Feast of the Virgin’s Birth, Giustiniani described her in words which could almost have inspired the central panel of the triptych, employing terms associated with the *Immacolata* (‘Tota Pulchra’...), equating physical beauty and moral perfection, referring to her divine election, and her role as mediatrix: ‘[She is] quite lovely... without imperfection of mind or body... mediatrix of the world, the chosen daughter of the Eternal Father’⁵⁰. On the other hand, Giustiniani accounted for the Virgin’s ‘state of grace’, her ‘free[dom] from the contagion of original sin...’, through her having been ‘...sanctified in the womb’, which suggests he skirted the more tendentious issue of her freedom from original sin at conception.⁵¹

The development of the S. Maria Formosa Congregation’s devotion to the *Immacolata* in the sixteenth century is impossible to trace as the relevant *mariegola* is lost.⁵² However, printed seventeenth-century *mariegole* explicitly convey the sodality’s

⁴⁷ See, for example, Gianfrancesco da Venezia (1880), pp. 18-19.

⁴⁸ ‘Erat, inquam, corpore virgo, carne incorrupta...’, L. Giustiniani ‘In Festo Purificationis Beatae Mariae Virginis, *Sermo Octavus*’, (1982), II p. 38

⁴⁹ Goffen (1986a) p.79 has argued this represented a defence of the cult because those who challenged it argued Mary would have had no need of postpartum purification rites (which she was generally believed to have undergone) were she untainted by original sin. Holweck (2003) notes the Immaculist rebuttal of Richard of St. Victor, or Peter Comestor, to St Bernard maintained Mary’s flesh had no need of purification.

⁵⁰ ‘Tota pulchra, absque delicto, sine mentis & corporis deformitate, Deo & hominibus amabilis habebatur. Sanctitatis etenim perlucidum erat speculum, puicitiae ornamentum, virginitatis gloria, humilitatis forma, honestatis rivulas, exemplar continentiae, sapientiae thronus, magistra virtutum, decus hominum, laetitia Angelorum, mundi interventrix, & aeterni Patris filia praedilecta’, L. Giustiniani, ‘In Festo Nativitatis Gloriosissimae V. Mariae, *Sermo Vigesimaquintus*’, (1982), II, p.79.

The citation ‘Tota Pulchra...’ (Song of Solomon 4:7), was traditionally associated with Immaculist polemics (see below).

⁵¹ ‘Quae enim sanctificata in utero, ac ab omni culpa originalis suerat liberata contagio, gratiae plenitudinem...’ L. Giustiniani, ‘In Festo Nativitatis Gloriosissimae V. Mariae, *Sermo Vigesimaquintus*’, (1982), II, p.79.

In 1506, when the first complete collection of Giustiniani’s writings was published, the Rector General of his Order, Girolamo Cavallo was concerned about Giustiniani’s lack of clarity as to whether the Virgin was conceived without original sin. Cavallo was reassured by a theologian that Giustiniani’s texts were acceptably Immaculist. However, Cracco argues relatively little attention is paid to the Virgin Mary in Giustiniani’s treatises and he doubts the provenance of the laudatory sermons. Cracco (1982), p. 20.

⁵² Cappelletti (1853), pp. 220-21.

devotion to the cult, now the subject of statutes, engraved frontispieces and prayers and hymns found tucked into the back of the texts. The 1643 *mariegola* devotes its first chapter to the feast of the Immaculate Conception: ‘...on the eighth day of the month of December in perpetuity to solemnly celebrate the Feast of the Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary Patron and Protector of our Congregation’.⁵³ In 1666 when the Congregation renewed its altar at S. Maria Formosa and installed the *Misericordia Triptych* into its new cornice, a plenary indulgence was granted to the Congregation’s members, recorded in their register where their altar is referred to explicitly as the ‘Altar of the Most Holy Conception’.⁵⁴

The Iconography of the *Misericordia Triptych*

The *Misericordia Triptych* is possibly the earliest surviving Venetian altarpiece dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, employing what was then the most widely-recognised visual vocabulary available of the cult.⁵⁵ Of course, in the fifteenth century dedicated iconographies of the Immaculacy were yet to be formulated;⁵⁶ for example, the iconography of the Virgin on a crescent moon would not be employed in Venetian altarpieces until the late-sixteenth century.⁵⁷ The Congregation’s 1643 *mariegola* indeed uses this iconography, showing the Virgin upon a crescent moon with an aureole of stars about her head; and in the 1688 *mariegola*, she is depicted on a globe, a serpent beneath her feet, and framed by the legend:⁵⁸ TOTA PVLCHRA, ET FORMOSA ES MARIA /

⁵³ ‘volumus, vt quotannis octava die mensis Decembris perpetuo solemniter celebretur Festivitas conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae Patronae, ac Protectricis Congregationis nostrae’ *Matricvla* ... Venice (1643), p. 9, ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 14 [67-68].

⁵⁴ ‘1666 – 31 Marzo / Indulgenza Plenaria nell’Altare della Beatissima Concettione / l’anime de Confratelli nel giorno dei morti p[er] tutta L’Ottava, et ogni seconda feria di Settimana concessa da P. P. Alessandro 7°.’ ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 13, 31 r.

Note also the inscription recorded near the altar (cited above).

⁵⁵ Other important local manifestations of the cult in the later fifteenth century include S. Maria dei Miracoli, thus dedicated in 1489, and the *scuole grandi* of S. Maria della Misericordia (1493) and S. Maria della Carità (1496). Chavasse (1996), p. 322.

Ettlinger (1979), p. 63 and p. 65, fig. 2, refers to the dedication of Venetian altars to the *Immaculate Conception* from at least the later fourteenth century, although no extant works are cited except one altarpiece of unknown provenance which is no longer believed to be Venetian – see the *National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue on CD Rom* (1995), cat. N.G. 4250.

Gianfrancesco da Venezia (1880), pp. 13-14, cited early foundations in honour of the Conception of the Virgin; the friars minor fostered the inception of the *Scuola Grande della Misericordia* in the mid-thirteenth century, originally named *S. Maria Concetta*. (This slightly preceded the *Scuola della Concezione* at the Frari.) He also asserts a large number of similarly-dedicated corporations arose on the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although examples given date from the sixteenth century. See also Gatti (1992), p. 64

⁵⁶ Fontana (1994), p. 32, also Levi d’Ancona (1957), p. 33.

⁵⁷ Humfrey (1996), p. 380.

⁵⁸ *Matricvla*... Venice (1643), p. 1. ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 14 [67-68].

ET MACVLA ORIGINALIS NON EST IN TE.⁵⁹ This verse interweaves the Congregation's traditional name *Maria Formosa*, with the verse from the Song of Solomon (4:7) traditionally associated with Immaculist polemics and employed in offices of the Immaculate Conception;⁶⁰ whilst the Virgin's physical beauty (she is 'formosa') was thus equated with her moral perfection – freedom from original sin – a tenet of the Immaculist cult.

On the other hand, pre-Tridentine images employed in the context of the Immaculate Conception borrowed from multifarious pre-existing Marian iconographies, but with the disadvantage of not connoting the cult exclusively and unequivocally. For example, the Virgin's Coronation or Assumption may allude to the Immaculate Conception, as indeed could an image of the Virgin of Mercy, although it is important to fully examine the iconographic and historic context before presuming an Immaculist reading.⁶¹ From the late-fifteenth century, a more exclusive iconography was developed, where the *Immacolata* was presented without the Child, standing or elevated above the ground, sometimes with God the Father above. This iconography was not perhaps current when Bartolomeo was engaged by the Congregation at S. Maria Formosa, for it may have been employed for the first time in Carlo Crivelli's 1492 *Immaculate Conception* (National Gallery, London). In Crivelli's painting the Virgin is shown without the Child, overshadowed by God the Father and the dove of the Holy Spirit, with the Immaculist significance rendered explicit through a banderol supported by angels which reads 'VT . INMENTE . DEI ABINITIO . CONCEPTA . FVI . ITA . ET . FACTA .SVM'.⁶²

Without such explication this iconography was ambiguous and, where the Virgin is depicted elevated, was open to confusion with the related Assumption – for instance, the Immaculate Conception is perhaps the subject of Giovanni Bellini's altarpiece (fig. 4.07; c. 1510, S. Pietro Martire, Murano) made for the Augustinian nuns of S. Maria

⁵⁹ 'Mary, you are completely fine and beautiful and without original sin'. *Matricvla...* (1688), p. 8 ASPV, Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 14 [67-68].

⁶⁰ According to Betto (1984), p. 46, the Congregation's name (as distinct from its dedication) *Formosa*, was taken from the host church.

Song of Solomon (4:7): 'Tota pulchra es amica mea, et macula non est in te' ('Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee' Douay-Rheims). On the use of this verse in Immaculate discourse and offices, see Barbieri (1993), pp. 71-74.

⁶¹ Humfrey (1996), p. 380. Levi d'Ancona (1957), p. 43 and pp. 33-34, stresses the variety of iconographies which could refer to the Immacolata, including the Virgin of Mercy iconography.

⁶² 'As in the beginning I was conceived in the mind of God, so have I in like manner been conceived in the flesh'. *National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue on CD Rom* (1995), cat. N.G. 906.

degli Angeli, Murano, where the Virgin is shown aloft, framed by seraphim and cherubim, and contemplated by various saints; but the subject of this work has been traditionally identified as the Assumption, despite the presence of eight chronologically diverse saints instead of the twelve apostles, and the reading remains controversial today.⁶³ On the other hand, Alvise Vivarini's *Assunta* (fig. 4.06; c. 1480, SS Felice e Fortunato, Noale) was interpreted by Goffen as the Immaculate Conception, but discovery of the original contract confirmed its subject was instead the Assumption.⁶⁴

As the nature and moment of the physical conception of the Virgin was a key problem in the Immaculate Conception controversy, Immaculists employed various iconographies including St Anne.⁶⁵ A few examples may indicate the range of St Anne iconographies associated with the cult. One type showed Anne and Joachim flanking the enthroned Virgin, as in Alvise Vivarini's *Virgin and Child with Saints Louis of Toulouse, Anthony, Anne, Joachim, Francis and Bernardine* (fig. 4.08; 1480, Accademia, Venice), which has been linked with the Immaculate Conception as it was made for S. Francesco, Treviso, where it adorned the altar of St Bernardine, who was an avid promulgator of the cult.⁶⁶ Another associated iconography, the 'holy kinship' group, comprised St Anne with the Virgin and the Christ child, and may have been designed to demonstrate the sanctity of Christ's lineage through the elimination of Joachim.⁶⁷ Pordenone's *St Anne Amongst the Doctors* (c. 1530, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples) was made for a chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception at the Observant Franciscan church of S. Maria Annunciata at Cortemaggiore near Piacenza. St Anne is depicted elevated on a plinth in religious rapture, whilst the Virgin's soul (*animula*) is borne by angels to her; in order to confer theological authority, the Church Fathers flank the Saint in the altarpiece and frescoes decorating the chapel's walls depict prophets and early ecclesiasts bearing inscriptions from texts employed in the offices of the Immaculate Conception.⁶⁸ In another variant, Jacopo Bassano used the *sacra conversazione* form in his *St Anne Enthroned with the Infant Mary and Saints Jerome and Francis* (1541, Museo Civico, Bassano), made for the

⁶³ The historic and continuing controversy over the subject of Giovanni Bellini's Murano altarpiece are summarised by Nepi Sciré in Goffen and Nepi Sciré (2000), pp. 139-40, cat. 21.

⁶⁴ The original contract prescribed 'nel compo de mezzo la Ascension dela Madona cum i duodeci Apostoli'. De Burgis (1988), p.132. Also Humfrey (1993), pp. 224-25, pp. 334-35, n. 34 and pp. 337-38.

⁶⁵ The St Anne cult peaked around 1500 following the doctrine's semi-official sanction, but her role was later diminished by the Council of Trent. See Ashley and Sheingorn (1990), pp. 47-48.

⁶⁶ J. Steer (1982), p. 29 and pp. 151-53; and Gentili (1986), pp.64-65

⁶⁷ Ashley and Sheingorn (1990); also Warner (1978), p. 243.

⁶⁸ Barbieri (1993).

Confraternita della Concezione (Confraternity of the Conception) at the church of S. Girolamo in Asolo, which had lately passed to the Reformed Observant Friars Minor. As if to explicate the altarpiece's theme, the artist inscribed the first step of St Anne's throne: 'CONCEPTIO BEATE MARIE....'.⁶⁹

But in the late-fifteenth century the dominant Immaculist iconography was still the rather less arcane Meeting of Joachim and Anne which was widely and popularly recognised as depicting the moment of the Virgin's miraculous conception.⁷⁰ First appearing in the second-century Protoevangelium of James, the legend of Anne and Joachim was popularised in western Europe by Vincent de Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine in the thirteenth century.⁷¹ Images of the Meeting were associated with the feast of the Conception of Mary, such that in the fourteenth century it was adopted as the emblem of a Parisian Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception.⁷² Most significantly, the Meeting appeared over altars dedicated to the *Immacolata*: Jacopo Bassano's *Meeting of Joachim and Anne* (late 1570s), which includes the Virgin of Mercy iconography in the *predella* area, was made for the church of Civezzano near Trent, where it was recorded on the altar of the Conception of the Virgin during a pastoral visitation.⁷³ Like Alvise's *Virgin and Saints* mentioned above, Carpaccio's *Meeting of Joachim and Anne with Saints Louis IX and Libera* was painted for an altar at San Francesco in Treviso (fig. 4.09; 1515, Accademia, Venice). Although it was commissioned by a private patron, Gentili argues that the local friars prescribed its iconography because 'the representation of Joachim and Anne constituted a eulogy to the Immaculate Conception'.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Fontana (1994), pp. 29-32.

⁷⁰ Warner (1978), pp. 239 and 244. According to Gentili the myth was widely recognised as the moment of the Virgin's conception, being 'fortemente radicato nella tradizione antica e largamente diffuso nell'opinione popolare' Gentili (1986), p.65, n. 27; also, Ashley and Sheingorn (1990), p. 18.

⁷¹ On the origins and spread of the Anna and Joachim legend see Levi d'Ancona (1957), p. 6 and pp. 44-45; Warner (1978), p. 239; Humfrey (1993), p. 344; Glasser (1977), pp. 228-30; Ashley and Sheingorn (1990), p. 18.

⁷² Early images with this association include an illuminated liturgical calendar, the *Meologium* (tenth century) of the Emperor Basil, noted by Warner (1978), p. 239. Lépiciér noted the use of the Meeting as the emblem of the Parisian confraternity. Lépiciér, *L'Immaculée Conception dans l'Art et l'Iconographie*, Spa (1956), p. 4. Cited Steer (1982), p. 152.

⁷³ Humfrey (1996), p. 380 and n. 23. My thanks are due to Professor Humfrey for bringing this article to my attention.

⁷⁴ '...la rappresentazione di Giocchino e Anna costituiva un elogio dell'Immacolata Concezione.' Gentili (1986), p.61. However, Gentili asserts, pp. 64-65, contradictorily that this work was not intended to represent the moment of the conception of the Virgin *per se*, and cites Caracciolo a Franciscan thinker who adopted a position on the Immaculate Conception so similar to that of the Dominicans as to seem Maculist. Gentili argues the absence of metaphysical symbols and the relatively youthful protagonists of Carpaccio's version demonstrates the conception was natural. He does not explain why Caracciolo's views might have particularly impinged on this image, or why the Trevisan Franciscans would have

Thus, the narrative side panels of Bartolomeo's *Misericordia Triptych*, adorning the altar certainly known later as 'the Altar of the Most Holy Conception',⁷⁵ would have been widely understood as depicting the Immaculate Conception and its consequence, the birth of the Virgin (figs. 4.10-4.11). In designing the triptych, Bartolomeo could have referred directly to Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1475 saw local publication of the text translated into Italian by Nicolò Malermi, a Camaldolese monk from Murano).⁷⁶ The *Legend* recounts the annunciation to Joachim and Anne and their subsequent meeting as follows:

One day an angel appeared with great brilliance to [Joachim]... 'I am an angel of the Lord, sent to announce to you that ...your wife will bear you a daughter and you will call her Mary. As you have vowed, she will be consecrated to the Lord from infancy and filled with the Holy Spirit from her mother's womb. And, as she will be born of an unfruitful mother, so, miraculously, the Son of the Most High will be born of her. His name will be Jesus and through him all nations will be saved. And let this be a sign to you: when you arrive at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, Anna your wife will be there waiting for you...'...

The same angel appeared to Anna...for a sign she should go to Jerusalem's Golden Gate, where she would meet her husband as he returned. So they met as the Angel had predicted, and were happy to see each other and to be sure they were to have a child.⁷⁷

The text emphasises the miraculous nature of the Virgin's conception through a quasi-Annunciation scene, the angelic voice emphasises St Anne's sterility and the godly nature of the conception, which is explicitly linked with the birth of Christ and ultimately the salvation of humankind. Similarly, where images of the Meeting were intended to signify the conception of Mary as miraculous (immaculate), the couple was portrayed with evidently aged features to emphasise the impossibility of sexual procreation, with some preternatural sign such as an angel, or the depiction of Anne, but not Joachim, with a halo.⁷⁸

therefore prescribed a scene which was popularly associated with an 'heretical' view of the conception – if that was, indeed, their view.

⁷⁵ As it was referred to in 1666, see above.

⁷⁶ The translator added two *beati* to the saints numerated by Voragine, one of which was Lorenzo Giustiniani. Noted by Labalme (1993), p.20, n. 13.

⁷⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, translated by Ryan (1993), II, p. 152.

⁷⁸ Levi d'Ancona (1957), pp. 44-45; Gentili (1986), p. 65.

In the 1475 triptych Bartolomeo rendered the Meeting explicitly miraculous by the hovering angel who touches the heads of Anne and Joachim, to connote the intervention of the Holy Spirit; indeed, d'Ancona, who did not examine the commissioning context of the altarpiece, cited the work *prima facie* as an example of a 'miraculous' depiction of the Meeting.⁷⁹ The couple's greeting is tender, but barely physical, their arms link but their bodies are separate, implying the absence of sexual communion, and their aged features demonstrate the impossibility of natural conception. For the composition of the figure group, Bartolomeo had looked to the *Visitation* (fig. 4.12; attrib. Jacopo Bellini, c. 1451) of the Mascoli chapel mosaics at St Mark's basilica; in its allusion to both the incarnation and the conception of John the Baptist in the womb of the elderly St Elizabeth, Bartolomeo's source was particularly appropriate.

Voragine had stressed that an elderly woman's conception – a familiar hagiographical *topos* – occurred as a demonstration of divine intervention:

...when [God] *closes* a woman's womb, he does this in order to *open* it miraculously later on, and to make it known that what is born is not the fruit of carnal desire but of the divine generosity⁸⁰

The open / closed metaphor of Voragine's text finds its visual counterpart in Bartolomeo's depiction of the Meeting in the wide-open door behind St Anne; of course, the door was symbolically associated with fecundity / virginity as the *porta clausa*, a familiar motif in depictions of the Virgin in a *hortus conclusus*. The emphatic terminus of the courtyard wall suggests the *hortus conclusus*, its Ghibelline-style battlements recalling the high walls of the Arsenale, not distant from S. Maria Formosa. The Golden Gate is transformed into a modest domestic threshold, as though the couple were reunited outside their home, one of the Congregation's 'houses in Castello'. The domestic settings of the side panels may have been suggested by the influence of northern or Germanic painting on the artist, and perhaps by the popular figuring of St Anne, widely recognised as a patron of marriage, fertility and childbirth.⁸¹

Chavasse interpreted Bartolomeo's Meeting as a comprehensible vernacular explication of

⁷⁹ Levi d'Ancona (1957), p. 45. Gentili (1986), p. 65, argues the sheer physicality of Carpaccio's *Meeting* negates this as this moment of conception 's'abbandonano ad un abbraccio assolutamente umano'.

⁸⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, translated by Ryan (1993), II, p. 152; my emphasis.

⁸¹ On the figure of St Anne in the late middle ages as protector of the married and promoter of fertility in sterile women, see Ashley and Sheingorn (1990), pp. 48 ff, and Sautman in *ibid.*, pp. 79 ff.

the esoteric theology of the Immaculate Conception, which was aimed at ordinary parishioners.⁸² However, the correction of the commissioners' identity renders Chavasse's reading problematic – as the majority of Congregation members were ecclesiasts, the primary audience of the altarpiece was theologically and culturally sophisticated. Their sophistication is exemplified in the language of the *mariegola* which is of a considerably higher register than other confraternity *mariegole*, such as those cited in chapters 5 and 6 here.⁸³ Whether their altarpiece was also directed at a wider public remains moot, as we do not know whether the Congregation's original chapel was accessible or even visible to non-members; the *mariegola* does not indicate that spiritual instruction of the laity was an important aspect of the confraternity's duties, although spiritual guidance was, of course, integral to the everyday working lives of its clerical members.

Bartolomeo achieved narrative continuity and formal balance in the altarpiece by rendering the Birth of the Virgin in the right-hand panel similar in scale, composition and chromatic intensity to the Meeting. As with the Meeting, the moment is rendered intimate and intense by the depiction of the protagonists at close quarters in a tightly enclosed space. Both mother and infant are endowed with a circlet halo, and Anne's wrinkled face shows the conception could not have occurred by natural means. Colours are darker and richer in the Birth to evoke the intimate and shadowy atmosphere of a domestic interior, and a bed curtain is pulled aside, permitting a glimpse into intimate domestic surroundings which recall the 'bourgeois interior' of many northern European Annunciations – or, indeed, Bartolomeo's own *Annunciation* (fig. 4.13; Museo Provinciale, Bari) of three years earlier.⁸⁴ In the background of the Birth of the Virgin, light penetrates a glazed window, suggestive of the metaphor typically used for the Incarnation in Annunciation scenes, and which the artist used explicitly in the 1472 *Annunciation*. In that work, the miracle of the Incarnation occurs before a pair of windows, one glazed and one open, which form the vertical axis of the composition, in which is aligned the dove of the Holy spirit and, at its apex, God the Father; analogous

⁸² Chavasse (1996), p. 327. Warner (1978), p. 239, also characterises the legend and iconography from the *protoevangelium* as the popular expression of the Immaculate Conception 'far from [the] conundrums of theology'.

⁸³ Seventeenth-century printed versions of the S. Maria Formosa *mariegola* remained in Latin, whereas most Venetian *scuole* had acquired more accessible *vulgare* capitularies since the fifteenth century. However, it seems that the Congregation's lost sixteenth-century *mariegola* was written in *vulgare*, noted by Capelletti (1853), p. 221, as a surprising aberration.

⁸⁴ See Robb (1936), pp. 501 ff., for a consideration of the domestic setting of the Annunciation as it predominated in fifteenth-century Flemish and Netherlandish depictions.

to the light penetrating the windows, light rays emanate from the dove to impregnate the Virgin. A similar metaphor was used in both text and image in the context of the Virgin's Immaculacy, for instance in the motif of the clear vase containing the lily in Crivelli's luminous *Immaculate Conception*.⁸⁵ Thus, the window / light motif in the Birth of the Virgin, may have alluded to the miraculous conception of the Virgin, as well as prefigure its ultimate resolution in the Incarnation. Of course, such a significance would have become explicit if a small Annunciation scene was indeed set below the side panels of the triptych, as suggested above.

The Birth of the Virgin panel was evidently informed by Antonio Vivarini's depiction of similar subjects in polyptych narratives, notably the *Birth of the Virgin* (fig. 4.16; 1450s, Neues Museum, Wiesbaden) from a polyptych of unknown original provenance which included scenes from the Life of the Virgin, and the *Birth of St Augustine* (fig. 4.17; Courtauld Gallery) from the *Polyptych of St Monica* (c. 1445?, formerly Church of S. Stefano, Venice); in both cases, Antonio depicted the scene in a contemporary domestic interior, with the mother receiving the swaddled child from the maid or nurse. As well as assuming the basic elements of the iconography, Bartolomeo also picked up incidental details, most notably the cusped-arch motif of the bench beside the bed (figs. 4.18-4.19). Conversely, the significance of the window in Bartolomeo's version is attested by the absence of a similar detail in Antonio's depiction of the same subject.

More unexpectedly, the Birth scene in the *Misericordia Triptych* may also have been influenced by Giotto's depiction of the same subject (c. 1305) in the Scrovegni chapel (fig. 4.14), which Bartolomeo must have known well given the chapel's close proximity to the Eremitani where he had been engaged on the Ovetari vault. Moreover, it is likely that Bartolomeo had very recently returned to Padua to agree the contract with the monks of the Padua Charterhouse for the 1475 *Lussingrande Altarpiece*, for the surviving contract of the later *Dormition of the Virgin*, made for the same commissioners, makes it clear Bartolomeo was present with the monks when that contract was agreed.⁸⁶ It should also be noted that the damp-fold drapery in the Meeting of the *Misericordia Triptych* particularly recalls Mantegna's early style, which

⁸⁵ See Rosand (1997), pp. 51-57, on light symbolism in Titian's works, which he relates to both the Venetian mosaic tradition and, distantly, to Jan van Eyck.

⁸⁶ Sambin (1964), p. 41.

indicates that in any recent trip to Padua, Bartolomeo had also returned to the Eremitani.

As Bartolomeo would do in the Birth of the Virgin, Giotto had depicted the maid handing the tightly swaddled child to St Anne, shown in profile sitting upright in bed, and likewise set the bed parallel to the picture plane with its curtain pulled aside. Giotto's influence is not immediately apparent, for the Venetian artist gothicised the interior setting, intensified the colours and *chiaroscuro*, and made certain compositional adjustments to the *trecento* model to enhance the formal and dramatic intensity of the S. Maria Formosa version. Other adjustments were necessitated by the rectangular format of the panel: the drawing together of the figures, cropping of extraneous space and figures and the elimination of the conflated scenes. But the vigour and dramatic quality of Bartolomeo's portrayal and the honest sturdiness of his human figures, relies more on Giotto than Antonio. It is also notable that Bartolomeo alluded to the washing of the child with the prominent depiction of a large wooden tub in the foreground; Giotto had introduced the washing of the infant into his version, whereas Antonio excluded any reference to the ablutions.⁸⁷ It is equally notable that whilst Bartolomeo's Meeting has something of the drama and affective quality of Giotto's, the Venetian artist eschewed both the physicality of the embrace and the impressive monumental gateway of the Scrovegni version.

Criticism of Bartolomeo's supposedly retrogressive employment of the 'old fashioned' Virgin of Mercy iconography in the central panel (fig. 4.22) is misplaced, for it overlooks the commissioners' likely prescription of the traditional iconography which functioned at the time as their corporate emblem: the Congregation's 1405-7 *mariegola*, which was still current when the triptych was commissioned and would not be replaced for decades, includes as its frontispiece an illuminated miniature of the Virgin of Mercy (fig. 4.20).⁸⁸ As Cecchini has observed, the earliest instances of the *Misericordia* iconography were employed exclusively in corporate contexts; and the iconography was, of course,

⁸⁷ Cecchini (1997), pp. 218-19, argued Italian representations of the Birth of the Virgin typically show the Infant being washed by the nurse, the presentation of the infant to its mother is an iconography more often associated with Northern Europe. Diana Norman (1999) pp. 82-83, discusses the motif of water vessels and other symbols of purification in Sienese depictions of the Birth of the Virgin. Water was an important symbolic component of the rich folk tradition associated with Saint Anne, as Sautman (in Ashley and Sheingorn (1990), pp. 81-83) has illustrated.

⁸⁸ The text of the S. Maria Formosa *mariegola* is transcribed in its entirety in Betto (1984), pp.340 ff. The *Misericordia* appears on the recto of the unnumbered fifth folio between the index and the main text.

employed emblematically by many sodalities in Venice and Italy well into the sixteenth century on all kinds of confraternity property, besides altar paintings, to signify corporate identity and faith in the Virgin's protection, favour and intercessory influence.⁸⁹ Indeed, it was noted in the introductory chapter that the Vivarini worked on the high altarpiece of the Scuola Grande della Carità (lost), a mixed-media work of which the Virgin of Mercy almost certainly appeared in the central section. A later example of this ubiquitous corporate iconography, also made for the Carità, is the large relief erected in 1495 on a housing block it owned, which was sculpted by the otherwise unknown Andrea Buregoto di Leonardo, Sante di Silvestro and Paolo di Vittore (fig. 4.24; Rio de S. Caterina, Venice), which is clearly derivative of the Virgin in Bartolomeo's *Misericordia Triptych* for Santa Maria Formosa, as well as Bartolomeo Bon's *Madonna della Misericordia* made for the eponymous rival Scuola Grande (figs. 4.21 and 4.23; c. 1450, Istrian stone, Victoria and Albert Museum; discussed below).⁹⁰ Although it could be used in this later period in more personal contexts also, visual evidence indicates the *Misericordia* type was still most frequently employed as a corporate emblem. The placement of the S. Maria Formosa Congregation's emblem in the centre of the *Misericordia Triptych* is analogous to the employment of the iconography by the Carità and the *Misericordia scuole*, as well as the documented case of the confraternity of priests in Pistoia which prescribed the depiction of the Trinity at the centre of their altarpiece, expressly because this was 'their symbol'.⁹¹

The obvious similarity of Bartolomeo's Madonna to the illuminated miniature of the Congregation's *mariegola* indicates that the Congregation sought consistency and continuity in the objects bearing their emblem, and directed Bartolomeo to the manuscript illumination as a model.⁹² Bartolomeo maintained the giant proportions of the Madonna and also included the pair of angels flanking the Virgin, though he increased the relative proportion of the Virgin's supplicants and added two floating angels which support the Virgin's crown, identifying her as Queen of Heaven. He also eliminated the *platytera* on the Madonna's breast and replaced it with an oval jewel, perhaps for temporal coherence in that his Madonna appears pregnant – her abdomen is high and swollen. According to Hall and Uhr the appearance of the Virgin's crown in combination with her pregnant state could signify her miraculous dispensation which uniquely privileged her with the mutually

⁸⁹ Cecchini (1997), p. 223.

⁹⁰ For the Rio de S. Caterina relief, Rizzi (1987), p. 297, cat. CN 324.

⁹¹ Rubin (1994), p. 204.

⁹² Observed by Sponza (1999), p. 22.

exclusive states of virginity and motherhood.⁹³

It is indicative of his engagement with sculpture that Bartolomeo turned to the imposing *Madonna della Misericordia* made some twenty-five years earlier by Bartolomeo Bon as his formal source for the figure of the Madonna. Bon's relief was made as the tympanum for the main portal of the *albergo* of the Scuola Grande della Misericordia (where the sculptor was enrolled), and as that confraternity's most public and impressive version of its corporate emblem, the figure must have been very well-known locally.⁹⁴ Bartolomeo Vivarini took up the monumentality of Bon's relief, the Virgin's slightly *contrapposto* stance, the oval shape of her head and the fall of the veil around her face, her overly-long arms and large hands which curl around the architectonic, protective mantle. The correspondence between the tympanum and Bartolomeo's painted panel is probably less evident today than when the former retained its original polychrome. Indeed, the intense colours of the triptych together with *trompe l'oeil* modelling recall polychromed sculpture and have invited comparison with carved altarpieces by Germanic artists such as Michael Pacher.⁹⁵

The donors depicted in Bartolomeo's *Misericordia Triptych* are distinguished by their portrait-like characterisation and their relatively large size (figs. 4.25-4.26), particularly when compared to the insignificant and stereotypical *confratelli* in the *St Ambrose Polyptych* which Bartolomeo would make for the stonemasons' *scuola* two years later. However, the range of ages and social groups in the *Misericordia* image could indicate these were intended as universal types, as has been suggested with regard to the similarly diverse and well-characterised supplicants appearing in Piero della Francesca's *Madonna della Misericordia*.⁹⁶ That the donors in both *Misericordia* altarpieces were perhaps portrait likenesses is supported by the chronicle of Niccolò della Tuccia who reported the inclusion of portraits, including his own, in an altarpiece featuring the *Misericordia* which

⁹³ Of eastern origin, the *platytera* showed the Christ Child within a Mandorla on his mother's breast. It was sometimes conflated with the *Misericordia* iconography in a type Levi d'Ancona (1957), p. 34, terms the 'Blacherniotissa'. The *platytera* also identified the Virgin as *Mater Dei* and alluded to the doctrine of the Incarnation. Muraro (1969), p. 43 and Koslow (1986), p. 11.

Hall and Uhr (1985), pp. 575-77, refer to the *Expectant Madonna with Saint Joseph*, (Amiens School, National Gallery, Washington).

⁹⁴ For Bartolomeo Bon's *Madonna della Misericordia*, see Pope-Hennessy (1964), pp. 342-45, cat. 369; Wolters (1976), I, pp. 290-91, cat. 250 and Williamson (1996), pp. 74-75.

⁹⁵ Pilo (1999), p. 32.

⁹⁶ For the donors in Piero's *Misericordia* altarpiece, Cole Ahl (2002), p. 22. As Gilbert (1988), p. 232, notes, traditionally the persons appearing in depictions of the Virgin of Mercy represented all the peoples of the earth, hence the depiction of both sexes and people of different status.

was commissioned for the 'chapel of the magnificent Lord Priors' in Viterbo in 1458;⁹⁷ Tuccia noted: 'we were painted naturally according to our office... under the cloak of that blessed figure [of Our Lady].'⁹⁸

The Virgin of Mercy iconography often shows the protected supplicants segregated by gender, as in the relief made in 1495 for the Carità. However, in both the S. Maria Formosa triptych and the *mariegola* miniature, the division is instead between laity and clergy, with lay persons occupying the Virgin's left and priests taking the privileged right side. As noted above, the *arciprete* depicted in the triptych was almost certainly Vettor Rosati, whilst the two priests nearest him, in purple and white vestments respectively, were probably the other senior officers of the Congregation. The individuals behind these men seem to be more junior clerics; they are evidently younger, exclusively male and the pleated fabric of their white surplices may be glimpsed. By appearing together with, but separate from, the laity, the confraternity's clerical members declare at once their common humanity and their separate status. Most importantly, the clerics' supplication of the Virgin of Mercy, the most explicit and well-recognised iconography of the Virgin's protective and intermediary role, also illustrates the priestly role as mediator for human souls and practitioner of the Christian funerary rites. Rosati's splendid cope with its 'embroidered' Resurrection alludes to the ultimate promise of Christian salvation and the conquest of the tomb and, in the context of an Immaculist image, the Resurrection may have also signified the necessity of the Virgin's original purity in the scheme for human salvation.⁹⁹ Of course, the Virgin was frequently compared to the Christian Church and, given the clerical context of the S. Maria Formosa commission, together with the monumental, architectonic form of the Virgin, it may be appropriate to read the central figure with her clergy and lay supplicants as a microcosmic embodiment of the Christian Church.¹⁰⁰

The prominent depiction of lay persons is notable, given the predominance of ecclesiasts in the sodality. As observed above, the Congregation was an exclusive organisation, and became increasingly so, with its members generally hailing from socially and educationally privileged backgrounds.¹⁰¹ Yet the balding middle-aged man, third from the front, does not

⁹⁷ Gilbert (1988), pp. 232-34.

⁹⁸ 'capella dei magnifici signori prioril...ci fummo dipinti naturale secondo ch'erevamo di funzione...sotto il mantello di quella benedetta figura [Nostra Donna]'. Gilbert (1988), p.233.

⁹⁹ I have been unable decipher any text on the banderoles.

¹⁰⁰ Schneider (1984), p. 160 and p. 164, interpreted the Virgin in Piero's *Misericordia Polyptych* as an embodiment of the Church.

¹⁰¹ Archival sources indicate that the maximum number of members was gradually reduced over time.

wear the typical garb of a patrician and several women of varying ages are represented; the mature woman in the foreground, whose dress and appearance echoes St Anne in the Birth scene, is almost as prominent as Rosati himself.¹⁰² This socially diverse lay group is therefore unlikely to represent lay members of the Congregation in all cases, but may rather allude to the traditional universality of the *Misericordia* iconography, probably the most potent symbol in the popular mind, of the Madonna role as protector and intercessor of all. It is also possible the lay people were depicted in acknowledgement of any donations made by them towards the altarpiece, or for the provision of candles and liturgical objects for the altar.¹⁰³

The donor portraits of the *Misericordia Triptych* are uniquely prominent for a late-*quattrocento* Venetian altarpiece, raising the question as to how this was deemed acceptable given the prevailing ethos of personal modesty. It seems that the answer lies in both the presentation of the figures in the altarpiece and the context of the commission. Firstly, the donors make gestures of supplication and humility – kneeling, gazing up in rapture at the Virgin – and their quirky and puckered physiognomies highlight the unblemished beauty of the Virgin, rather than flattering their human vanity. Perhaps more significantly, the corporate context of the altarpiece may have mitigated any ‘transgression’ of the code – as Fortini-Brown has observed, magnificence in private individuals’ funerary chapels was censured, whereas ostentation in a corporate context could be lauded as patriotic.¹⁰⁴ Further, the high prestige enjoyed by the Reverend Congregations and their important role in civic life, rendered highly visible by their participation in funeral processions, must have set them apart and perhaps exempted them from the code, analogous to the way doges and military leaders were often buried in monumental tombs.

Of course, the donor portraits may also have functioned commemoratively. Niccolò della Tuccia insisted he was not boasting when recording that his portrait appeared in the Viterbo

D. Romano (1987), pp.92-95, has estimated that a quarter of parish priests were born into the patriciate; and for those with less auspicious origins, the priesthood afforded social prestige, their clerical training giving access to the most privileged circles.

¹⁰² Distinctions between the dress of widows, tertiaries and older women generally is problematic.

Referring to Florentine widows, Tinagli (1997), p. 63, describes them with ‘...heads...covered with a white cloth, and they wear ...restrained, dark...garments’.

¹⁰³ See above regarding the Congregation’s receipt of generous donations on the part of the public. See Rubin and also chapter 5 here on the case of the *Trinity* altarpiece for the Pistoia company of priests, where the confraternity’s treasurer was rewarded with the inclusion of a saint to whom he was especially devoted in acknowledgement of his generous contribution for the altar’s upkeep. Rubin (1994), p.204.

¹⁰⁴ P. F. Brown (1987) p.189, and Humfrey (1988), p. 412.

Misericordia altarpiece. It was ‘neither for pride nor vainglory’, but he mentioned it so his heirs or successors (*successori*) would better remember him and would be prompted to pray for his soul.¹⁰⁵ It is fair to suggest that, similarly, the portraits of the lay donors appearing in Bartolomeo’s *Misericordia Triptych* reflected, and perhaps stimulated, the most important function of the priestly Congregation which commissioned it – the suffrage of the souls of the dead.

§

This chapter has examined how the *Madonna della Misericordia Triptych* was made to mark or affirm the dedication of the Congregation of Clergy at S. Maria Formosa to the *Immacolata*. Although the precise historical circumstances of the Congregation’s adoption of this *titulus* remain mysterious, it has been argued this was due to the influence of senior ecclesiasts on the Congregation and it is notable that the altarpiece was installed in the jubilee year which preceded the official pronouncement of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception by Sixtus IV. The unfortunate substitution of the altarpiece frame with the possible loss of minor painted panels or inscriptions has significantly disrupted the reading of the altarpiece, as well as its formal integrity, but it is an indication of the significance of the rededication that the Congregation commemorated it by commissioning a striking new altarpiece which merged their traditional emblem, the Virgin of Mercy, with the most ancient and recognisable iconography of the Immaculate Conception – as if to mark both a new beginning and simultaneously emphasise corporate continuity and spiritual tradition. Through the inclusion of what appear to be portrait likenesses, the Virgin of Mercy iconography also signified the Virgin’s protection and favour of the Congregation, as well as the important intercessory role its clerical members performed on behalf of lay donors.

The award of the altarpiece contract to Bartolomeo by the prestigious and wealthy Congregation indicates the esteem in which his work was held by his contemporaries, as well as the artist’s profitable use of personal connections. Quite different from works such as the magnificent, but highly conservative *St Augustine Polyptych*, the *Misericordia Triptych* is exceptional in the artist’s oeuvre in both form and content, and demonstrates his versatility and his now-underestimated narrative skills. Through the description of affective, tender moments between plain people in charmingly-observed,

¹⁰⁵ ‘non per superbia, nè per vanagloria...’. Gilbert (1988), p. 233.

familiar settings, the miracle of the Immaculate Conception is compellingly narrated. As narrative continuity of the side panels is maintained through balance of scale, composition and the mundane settings, so it is calculatedly disrupted with the larger iconic central panel, which renders the Queen of Heaven magnificent and imposing.

The altarpieces discussed in the following chapters 5 & 6 were also made for local confraternities, although these operated with very different scope and within very different social milieux from the clerical sodality discussed here. It is indicative of Bartolomeo's local 'reach' that he attracted such socially and pecuniarily diverse patrons, and of the importance he placed on the local market that works destined for these varied clients were of a consistently high quality.

The Stonemasons' Confraternity and the *St Ambrose Polyptych*

(1477)

*'...sta congregado ... nostro Capitolo del povero mestier di taiapiera per schivar molti inconvenienti et scandoli intravegnudi...per esser el dito mestier nele man de homini che non sono dele terre de Venetiani, ne ad quelli portano amor...'*¹

The *St Ambrose Polyptych* (fig. 5.01; Accademia, Venice) comprises five panels with St Ambrose enthroned (central panel: 125 x 47 cm) and Saints Peter, Paul, Sebastian and Louis IX of France (side panels, 108 x 36 cm). Bartolomeo signed and dated the work in 1477: (on the St Peter panel) BARTHOLOMEVS VIVARINVS DE MVRIANO PINXIT·1477; (on the St Ambrose panel) S[ER] AMBR[BROGIVS] VIVIANI CAST[ALD]^o SANT[VS] [LVDO]VIC[VS?] S[ER] PETRVS MVNTI[N].² SCR[IVAN] E CONF[RATELLI]; (on the St Paul Panel) IACOBVS DE FAENCIE IN.CISIT. The polyptych is now displayed without its original frame.

Aside from the unusual and evidently confraternal inscription, almost nothing is known about the circumstances of the commission or later employment of the impressive pentaptych, and it is overlooked in the old Venice guidebooks. The earliest certain record of the work dates to the early nineteenth century when it was found in the meeting-room of the confraternity of the Venetian stonemasons (*scuola dei tagliapietra*). This suggests *prima facie* that the polyptych was made for the stonemasons' sodality, although, as there are several anomalies regarding its provenance and iconography, the early history of the altarpiece will be investigated in detail. The iconography, formal qualities and typology of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* will be interpreted here as the expression of the religious concerns and political affiliations of a trades confraternity. The *scuola dei tagliapietra* was one among numerous Venetian confraternities which functioned as trades guilds (*arti* or *mestieri*), established to

¹ BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 31r-v.

² See below on the possible identification of the name 'Ludovicus' and the lacuna.

oversee, regulate and protect a local trade, also providing welfare to impecunious or sick members and their families. The trades *scuole* were essentially democratic organisations headed by elected officers, and constituted according to their respective *mariegole* which laid out the rules for the internal organisation of the relevant confraternity, as well as regulations for the local operation of the trade. The trades were not, however, autonomous, being supervised and controlled by the State which sought to reconcile the partisan interests of any trade with those of the wider economic community. Despite their secular function, the trades *scuole* were articulated along the lines of other *scuole piccole* as religious sodalities, being based at a 'host' church, and availing themselves of similar devotional rites and paraphernalia – including the altarpieces which provided the subject for the invaluable 1986 paper by Humfrey and Mackenney on the Venetian trades *scuole* as artistic patrons. In the fifteenth century the *scuola dei tagliapietra* was a relatively large and heterogeneous sodality, numbering around two hundred, comprising natives and foreigners, who practiced a range of related professions from humble stonecutters to prominent sculptors and architects; membership of the confraternity was compulsory for the practice of these trades in the city.

The fine altarpiece made the following year (1478) for an altar in the church of San Giovanni in Bragora will also be discussed briefly in this chapter (fig. 5.17). The frame of the *Bragora Altarpiece*, like that of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, may have been made by carver Jacopo da Faenza. As the *Bragora* and *St Ambrose* altarpieces give rise to a number of questions about working practices including the Vivarini shop's collaborative relationships with frame-makers, the final section here discusses this together with other commercial aspects of the workshop.

The Original Form of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*

The different arrangements in which the panels of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* have been photographed indicate uncertainty over their correct layout. However, the most convincing and usual arrangement places Saints Peter and Paul on corresponding positions either side of the central panel, with Peter taking the left side, so that the pair are turned in slight *contrapposto* towards the central figure; in this arrangement, the darker streaks of the marble pedestals operate as orthogonals to lead the eye towards a central vanishing point behind the enthroned figure. Saints Peter and Paul also flank the central panel in a number of other Vivarini polyptychs, such as the upper register of

Antonio's 1464 *Pesaro Polyptych* (fig. 2.12), the lower register of his *Lecce Polyptych* (1460s?), Bartolomeo's 1475 *Conversano Polyptych* (fig. 4.04), and Alvise's 1476 *Montefiorentino Polyptych* (fig. 1.11). (Although on other occasions the pair were placed together, as in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01), or flanked the extremes of an altarpiece, as with the 1450 Bologna *Certosa Polyptych* (fig. 0.01)). Saints Louis and Sebastian were positioned at the extremes of the altarpiece, perhaps with Louis to the far left and Sebastian to the far right, as suggested by their respective stances. This arrangement allows the inscription to remain unbroken and to be read in an appropriate order: artist – commissioners – carver.

The inclusion of the carver of the frame, Jacopo da Faenza, is exceptional in an inscription on an altarpiece by Bartolomeo: 'IACOBVS DE FAENCIE IN.CISIT.' In 1929 Paoletti described the frame in which the polyptych was then displayed as 'an insipid imitation made by the Vienna Museum',³ and more recent Accademia publications state that the original frame is lost.⁴ However, Griffiths noted that in 1884 the 'imitation' frame was catalogued as the much-repaired original (fig. 5.02);⁵ the very dilapidated original frame had been despatched to Vienna together with the polyptych panels in 1838 where it was subject to extensive repairs and replacements, with *lacunae* patched according to the design of the surviving original members.⁶ This account is supported by the similar detailing of the frame as it appears in photographs when compared to other frames associated with Jacopo da Faenza, who was certainly the author of the frame of Giovanni Bellini's 1488 *Frari Triptych* (fig. 7.06) and perhaps made the frames of Bartolomeo's *Ca' Bernardo* and *Bragora* altarpieces.⁷ As with the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* and Bellini's *Frari Triptych*, flat pilasters separating the painted panels of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* are adorned with symmetrical foliate reliefs rising from classicising vases; the entablature frieze comprises a bolder, scrolling, foliate decoration and the *predella* is decorated with symmetrical, organic designs.

³ Paoletti (1929), p. 102, '...della originale cornice...nulla più resta; poichè quella che oggi vediamo non è che una insipida imitazione fatturata nel Museo di Vienna...'.
⁴ Nepi Sciré (1991), pp. 62-63, no. 22, described the original frame as lost.

⁵ Griffiths (1976), p. 15

⁶ Engerth (1881), pp. 418-19: 'Die Umrahmung des Bildes ist von Jacopo di Faenza gemacht. Sie ist mit den fünf Holztafel zugleich in sehr verwahrlostem Zustande nach Wien gekommen und hier zusammengestellt worden, wobei einige Ergänzungen nothwendig wurden. Es ist dabei nicht nöthig gewesen, Formen zu erfinden, weil die ursprüngliche Gestaltung jedes einzelnen Theiles aus den vorhandenen Stücken vollkommen ersichtlich war.'

⁷ Humfrey (1993), p. 218, p. 346 no. 24 and p. 348, no. 38; also chapter 7 here.

However, certain formal aspects of the frame are problematic. The angular configuration of the central gable is particularly unsatisfactory and appears awkward over the round-topped *St Ambrose* panel. This gable form was probably designed to facilitate the job of the nineteenth-century carver, but it seems likely that Jacopo would have favoured a round arch over the central panel, as with the aforementioned *Frari* altarpieces. The top of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* appears severe and flat and would almost certainly have been embellished with *all'antica* ornament and finials, such as the torches and mermaids seen on the *Frari Triptych*; any such protrusions could well have broken off and been lost prior to the nineteenth-century intervention. The decoration on the restored predella appears mechanically repetitive, and it lacks the modulation in pattern and plane seen in most contemporary *predelle*; it seems likely that this area originally included 'plinths' to correspond with the pilaster bases, as in Bellini's *Frari Triptych*, or saints or emblems in roundels, as in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*. Such losses and modifications to the frame have probably resulted in the disruption of the iconographic and patronal programmes of the altarpiece.

The Provenance and Early History of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*

It is not known how the polyptych was originally employed and displayed as the writers of early guidebooks overlooked it, and it was not documented in known archival sources. What follows is therefore an attempt to illuminate the provenance, circumstances of commissioning and situation of the altarpiece as far as possible; attention is first paid to problems of provenance as the iconography of the polyptych is significantly anomalous.

The earliest certain record of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* dates to the time of the suppression of Venetian institutions in the early nineteenth century, when its provenance was officially recorded as the stonemasons' *scuola* in Venice, generally understood in this context to refer to the masons' confraternity *albergo* (meeting-house) adjacent to the ancient church of S. Aponal (Apollinare).⁸ The *albergo* was also overlooked by the early published sources, such as Sansovino and Ridolfi.

⁸ The official inventories of artworks taken into storage following the suppressions were published by Ludwig (1901), II, p. vii, no. 557 and p. viii, no. 102.

The *Five Crowned Martyrs*, attrib. Catena, and the *St Ambrose* polyptych, both noted as having belonged to the *Scuola dei Tagliapietra*, were stored at the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, then employed as a repository.

Katalog der Scuola san Giovanni Evangelista 414.

Prospetto A: Arte di Tagliapietra. Ancona, in cinque comparti, [stato] buono 5- X 7. Tavola. Cinque Santi. Bartolomeo Vivarini.

Whilst the form of the polyptych indicates that it was designed as an altarpiece, and its inscription and representation of *confratelli* in the central panel verify that it was made for a confraternity, the prominent depiction of St Ambrose is perplexing, as the patron saints of the Venetian *tagliapietra* were the Four (or five) Crowned Martyrs, the traditional protectors of European stonemasons.⁹ Their saints' day on November 8 was celebrated by the confraternity members who were instructed in their *mariegola* to observe it strictly:

...all those of the craft of stonemasonry must celebrate the feast of the four martyrs, patrons of the said craft, that is St Nicostratus, St Claudius, St Castorius and St Superial (*sic*) on the day it falls, that is November 8; and no-one of the said craft of masonry [should] work, nor have another work for him or for others, on the said feast when the [feast] days of the said martyrs fall, on the pain of 100 soldi piccoli...¹⁰

As one would expect, the Crowned Martyrs are depicted on various objects associated with the masons' *scuola*, including the frontispiece to their *mariegola* (fig. 5.05; c.1510s, text includes additions until 1799; restored 1708), an altarpiece traditionally attributed to Vincenzo Catena (fig. 5.03; c. 1529, store, Accademia, Venice), also recorded at the *albergo* after the suppression of the *scuola*, two rectangular canvasses recently published by Merkel which may have adorned the walls of the *albergo* (fig. 5.06; attrib. Jacopo Tintoretto and Andrea Schiavone, c. 1545, oil on canvas, San Francesco del Deserto, Venice) and a further lost altarpiece said to be by Andrea Schiavone, seen by the early guidebooks writers in the masons' chapel at S. Aponal.¹¹

Im Ramo Demaniale, Nr. 597: Prospetto d'altare ossia pala in legno dorato rappresentante cinque Santi. Arte di Tagliapietra. [...] Nr. 102 Stato Generale 414: Scuola di Tagliapietra. Quadrilungo, [stato] cattivo. 6-3 x 2-3. Tavola. Santi Protettori dell'Arte. Catena Vincenzo.

⁹The Crowned Martyrs were the traditional patrons of medieval European stone masons. Their hagiography is somewhat confused, having been derived from two differing legends. According to the Pannonian account, five skilled carvers, Simpronian, Claudius, Nicostratus, Castorius and Simplicius, refused to comply with the Emperor Diocletian's order to supply a statue of Aesulapius and were therefore commanded to make a sacrifice to the Sun-god. They were executed for refusing to make the sacrifice, although Simplicius was unaccountably omitted. Attwater and John (1995), pp. 138-39.

¹⁰ '....tutti quelli de larte di taiapera debiano celebrar et festizar la festa de i quatro martori patroni dela dita arte, cioè San Nicostrato: San Claudio: San Castorio: et San Superial, in el di che vignera, che vien a viij de novembrio: et non [...] possa algun dela dita arte de i taiapiera lavorar, ne far lavorar per si, ne per altri in le dite festa, e zorni che i diti martori vegnerano, soto pena de soldi cento de pizoli, per cadaun, et per cadauna fiada che i contrafarano,o, lavorera, o farano lavorar.' BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 17v, no. XVI.

¹¹ For the *mariegola* see Caniato and Borgo (1990), p. 178, n. 14; on the canvasses which may have adorned the walls of the *albergo*, Merkel in Pilo (ed.) (1999); for the provenance of the *Crowned Martyrs* altarpiece by Catena, Ludwig (1901), II, p. viii, no. 102.

Scholars have therefore doubted the use of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* as an altarpiece and its status as an official commission by the stonemasons' confraternity, because of its iconographic incongruity and the existence of the altarpiece attributed to Catena in the masons' *albergo* with its more appropriate iconography. Most pertinent is Paoletti's hypothesis that the *St Ambrose* polyptych was not made for the *tagliapietra*, but instead for the Milanese nationals' confraternity, for which St Ambrose was a patron saint. According to Paoletti, the *St Ambrose Polyptych* is identifiable with a lost altarpiece found in the Milanese confraternity *albergo*. As this work was attributed to the Vivarini in the old sources, Paoletti's hypothesis merits careful inspection.¹² However, the sources describe an altarpiece clearly of a different format and iconography from the *St Ambrose Polyptych*. Boschini recorded a triptych: 'a picture divided into three compartments, in the centre Mary with the Child, St John the Baptist and St Ambrose; and on the sides two soldier saints',¹³ and Zanetti noted: 'In the Milanese *scuola* at the Frari, in the second room there is a picture by the Vivarini (perhaps by Bartolomeo), with the Madonna, St John the Baptist, St Ambrose and two Soldier Saints'.¹⁴ The accuracy of these accounts is supported by their iconographic specificity, and the consonance of the iconography with the dedication of the Milanese *scuola*, for which St John the Baptist was a co-dedicatee.¹⁵ The soldier saints appearing on the wings of the triptych were almost certainly Gervase and Protasius, twin martyrs of Milan, whose cult was linked with St Ambrose. The Baptist and the twin martyrs also appear in the famous *St Ambrose Altarpiece* made by Alvise Vivarini for the Milanese confraternity chapel in the Frari (fig. 5.19; completed by Marco Basaiti, c. 1500-10, *in situ*).¹⁶ Conversely, the iconography of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* by Bartolomeo does not properly coincide with the dedication of the Milanese *scuola*, as it excludes the Baptist, Gervase and Protasius, and the *confratelli* depicted in the central panel are exclusively male, whereas the Milanese *scuola* had admitted women since 1420.¹⁷ There is, therefore, sufficient evidence to discount Paoletti's argument.

¹² Paoletti (1929), p. 102; Marconi (1955), p. 160.

¹³ 'Nella detta scuola [di S. Ambrogio] vi è sopra il Banco un quadro in tre partimenti: nel mezo Maria col bambino, S. Giovanni Battista, e S. Ambrogio: e dalle parti due Santi Cavalieri', Boschini (1674), S. Polo, p. 46; see also Marconi (1955), p. 160.

¹⁴ 'Nella Scuola de' Milanesi ai Frari / nella stanza seconda v'è una pittura de' Vivarini (e forse di Bartolommeo) con la Madonna, S. Giambattista, Sant' Ambrogio e due Santi Cavalieri'. Zanetti (1972), pp. 30-31.

¹⁵ Marconi (1955), p. 160.

¹⁶ Humfrey (1993), p. 351, cat. 56.

¹⁷ On 5 June 1420, the Council of Ten agreed that the *scuola* could accept 'uxores et alie domine ipsorum mercatorum'. Cited Sbriziolo (1967-68), p. 427, no. 29 and corresponding note.

The second significant problem regarding the provenance of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* are the two aforementioned altarpieces depicting the Crowned Martyrs, made for the masons' chapel and *albergo* and attributed to Catena and Schiavone respectively, which apparently rendered the altarpiece by Bartolomeo redundant. The work attributed to Catena, which was found in the *albergo* after the suppression, is satisfactorily dated to 1529, or shortly thereafter, the year when the *tagliapietra* decided to install a new altar at their host church of S. Aponal.¹⁸ Measurements taken demonstrate the *Crowned Martyrs* attributed to Catena was certainly made to fit the void of the central section of the surviving *tagliapietra* altar (panel: 119 x 81 cm; void in marble altar: 118.5 x 80 cm).¹⁹ There can be little doubt that the altar (fig. 5.04), which was moved to the former *albergo* of the Mercanti di Vin after the dissolutions, was originally made for the masons' chapel at S. Aponal rather than their *albergo*, for it predates the erection of the *albergo* by some fifty years.

Nonetheless, it seems that the altar of 1529 with the image by Catena was substituted after a relatively short period, for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century observers noted lost works said to be by the hand of Andrea Schiavone on the altar in the church.²⁰ Ridolfi recorded: '...for the altar of the Tagliapietra in S. Apollinare, [Schiavone] painted the panel of the Crowned saints, who appear together in a *sacra conversazione*, and on the pilasters, the Annunciate Virgin';²¹ Martinioni's account was very similar: 'Andrea Schiavone painted the Panel on the altar of the Stonemasons with the four (*sic*) Crowned Saints, and on the pilasters also did the Annunciation';²² And Boschini recalled the work included five, rather than four, martyrs: '... There is also the Panel with the five Crowned [Martyrs], by Schiavone, the Altar of the Tagliapietra'.²³ And in 1771, Zanetti noted: 'In Sant'Apollinare, on the second altar on the right is kept a lovely picture by Andrea [Schiavone] with the five crowned Holy Martyrs, a work in which

¹⁸ BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 44v.

¹⁹ My thanks are due to the late Sandro Sponza who confirmed the exact measurements of the painting with conservation staff at the Accademia, who confirmed that the measurements were as per Marconi (1955). Sponza also explained how the painting would have been inserted in the altar, such that its dimensions were necessarily slightly larger than the aperture.

²⁰ It is unclear whether at the time of the suppression this altar came from the masons' chapel in Sant'Aponal, or instead their *albergo*. Caniato and Dal Borgo (1990), p. 226, caption to fig. 235, state categorically that this altar was the masons' altar at S. Aponal. However, Gramigna and Perissa (1981), p. 93 and p. 95, indicate its provenance was the *albergo* (the *scuola* was indeed recorded as having a marble altar, see below.) In neither text are sources given.

²¹ 'Dipinse per lo altare dei Tagliapietra, in santo Apollinare, la tavola de'santi Coronati che stanno a colloquio insieme, e ne' pilastri l'Annunziata'. Ridolfi (1999), I, p. 324.

²² 'Nell'Altare de i Taglia Pietra, dipinse la Tavola con li Santi quattro Coronati, Andrea Schiavone, che ne i pilastri fece anco l'Annunziata.' Martinioni in Sansovino (1998), p. 185.

²³ 'Euui poi il Martirio delli cinque Coronati, di Giulio dal Moro. Vi è anco la Tauola con li cinque Coronati, dello Schiauone, Altare de'Tagliapietra' Boschini (1674), 'Sestiere di S.Polo', p. 7.

one sees how much he liked the inventions of Parmigianino. Above, on the sides, in the same hand of Andrea [Schiavone], is the Annunciate Virgin...'.²⁴

The most likely scenario seems that the 1529 altar with the panel by Catena, originally made for the church, was dismantled and moved to the *albergo* when that was erected in the 1580s, to be immediately replaced in the more public space of the church by a new and fashionable altar with its lost paintings by an artist whose style resembled that of Andrea Schiavone (Schiavone himself had predeceased the erection of the *albergo* by about twenty years). The commissioning patterns of the Tagliapietra and the likely motives for their rapid turnover of church altarpieces will be considered in more detail below.

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A further problem is the anomalous iconography of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, which may be better understood through recovery of its early history. It seems most likely the polyptych was originally conceived as an altarpiece for a chapel in the masons' former host church of San Giovanni Evangelista, where the *scuola* was based until the early sixteenth century (fig. 5.07). At San Giovanni Evangelista the masons had no dedicated *albergo*, their accord of 1396 with the Prior of San Giovanni Evangelista reveals they were conceded a room just one day a month for their statutory chapter meetings; there is no suggestion in the contract that the masons were permitted to decorate or furnish this borrowed space, and it is improbable they would have erected an altar there.²⁵ The 1396 accord obliged the church to perform religious rites on behalf of the masons. These were carried out before a designated altar in the church, then dedicated to St Clare:

...I [the prior] promise you [the confraternity] by special agreement to have a mass celebrated every Tuesday at the altar of St Clare, and every year to have a High mass celebrated on the day, or feast, of your four crowned martyr saints standard-bearers (*gonfalonieri*) of the said trade, which occurs on the eighth day of the month of November with the Cleric who reads the Gospel and the Cleric who reads the Epistle ceremonially dressed for the honour and reverence of Our

²⁴ 'In Sant'Apollinare all'altare secondo alla dritta conservasi una bella tavola di Andrea con in cinque Santi Martiri coronati: opera in cui si vede quanto gli piacessero le invenzioni del Parmigianino. Dai lati nell'Alto evvi dell'istessa mano di Andrea l'Annunziata'. Zanetti (1972), p. 244.

²⁵ '...dar e imprestar a voi...uno albergo, el qual ha la porta in lo Claustra, solamente per quello di...'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 3v.

Lord Jesus Christ and of the four martyr saints for the souls of your dead; after celebration of the mass every Monday, the Priest is bound to go onto the tomb saying the office of the dead...²⁶

There is no indication here of any right, or intention, to change the dedication of the altar – nor indeed that the masons enjoyed actual *juspatronatus* of it.²⁷ However, given the later acquisitive ambitions of the sodality (especially with regard to the establishment of an *albergo*), and the competitive atmosphere between the *scuole* which stimulated artistic patronage and display, it is unlikely the *tagliapietra* accepted this arrangement for long.²⁸ If the majority of *scuole* had acquired rights to a side chapel and altar by the fifteenth century, we can be fairly certain the *tagliapietra* were motivated to acquire similar privileges.²⁹

The *titulus* of the altar used by the masons would have changed if the image of St Ambrose was installed there – as Gardner explains, the official function of an altarpiece, insofar as this existed, was to identify the *titulus* of an altar.³⁰ Unfortunately the sparse *quattrocento* records from San Giovanni Evangelista provide insufficient information about the patronage rights and dedications of the various altars in the church, and do not reveal whether the masons were later conceded an altar dedicated to St Ambrose, or their patron saints. Changes could well have been made to altar dedications in San Giovanni Evangelista after major renovations were carried out in the early 1440s. Unfortunately, further radical redesign of the church in later centuries has made it impossible to determine anything about the arrangement of its altars in the later fifteenth century; however, given Bartolomeo's sensitivity to the architectonic spaces in which his altarpieces were situated, it seems likely the horizontally-biased, single-tier *St*

²⁶ Anchor prometto per special pacto a voi far celebrar ogni zorno di marti una messa alo altar di sancta Chiara: et ogni anno far celebrar una messa sollemne in el di di vostri quatro sancti martiri coronati confaloneri delarte predicta el qual di over festa, vien adi octo del mexe de novembrio cum Zago de vangelio, e Zago da epistola apparati per honor et reverentia del Signor nostro Iesu Christo et de quelli quatro sancti martiri per le anime de li vostri morti: Et celebrada la messa ogni Zorno de luni', el Sacerdote sia tegnudo de andar sopra larcha digando lo officio di morti... BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 4r.

²⁷ By the fifteenth century, virtually all trades *scuole* enjoyed the rights to a side-altar in a host parish or conventional church. Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 318, describe the use of church altars by the trades *scuole*.

²⁸ On the competition between *scuole* which stimulated artistic patronage, see particularly Brown (1987) and Humfrey (1988). The motive for the stonemasons' decision to erect a meeting house is discussed below.

²⁹ For the observation that the majority of trades *scuole* enjoyed rights to an altar, Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 318.

³⁰ Excepting the many instances where the Virgin appears as the most important figure in altarpieces made for altars dedicated to another saint, who appears in a more subordinate position, one would normally expect the altar *titulus* to be depicted in any image over an altar. Gardner (1994), p. 10, and pp. 16-17.

Ambrose Polyptych would have been designed for a side chapel which was fairly generously proportioned, but endowed with a lower vault than the main vessel of the church.³¹

The commission of the altarpiece from Bartolomeo, which is unrecorded in the *mariegola* of the stonemasons' *scuola*, could have represented an important step in the expansion of their assets in a conspicuous way. The masons had long resolved to accumulate their assets, perhaps to improve the social standing of their *scuola*, a matter which would become an increasing preoccupation and reflected a shift in emphasis from the expenditure of resources more exclusively in alms. Earlier in the fifteenth century the masons had decided: 'to multiply and increase the property of our *scuola* of stonemasons'.³² There was a concomitant increase in display, and from 1461 it was decided feast days should be more magnificent and cash should be made available for trumpet-players for the procession, as well as for priests:³³

...for the feast of our *mestiere* of the four Crowned it is necessary to make certain payments for the priests invited to say mass and take part in the feast-day procession...

...on our feast-day of the stonemasons it is necessary to hire trumpeters to take part in the procession. And the chairman (*gastaldo*) should be free to spend on the trumpets from the funds of the *scuola*...³⁴

³¹ There is little information about the early form of the church or its altar dedications. The church archive contains material mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and early information is mainly gleaned from documents relating principally to the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista based there. Pazzi (1985), pp. 17-19, p. 22, pp. 27-28 and pp. 49-51, notes only one early dedication, an altar of the Madonna, mentioned in a mid-fourteenth-century document. In 1441 the Scuola Grande employed a generous legacy to fund a new chapel in the church which effectively created a new apse, re-oriented the building and changed the articulation of its interior. In 1443 further building works included the repositioning of the choir. Such changes perhaps invited new altar dedications, although records from this period are insufficient. Further important works were carried out to the church interior in the sixteenth century, and the interior underwent more major decorative works in 1759. In 1787 Dionisi (1787), p. 27, listed the altarpieces in the Church, by which time there was no altar dedicated to St Clare, St Ambrose nor the Crowned Martyrs. But the author did record two *lateral*i above the high altar: 'Maria Annunziata dall'Angelo. Di Vivarino da Murano.'

³² '...multiplicar e acresser i beni dela scuola nostra di tagiapiera...' BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 22v, XXIX.

³³ On guild processions see Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 321.

³⁴ '...per la festa del mestier nostro di quatro Coronadi el sia de bisogno a far certe spexe per i preti invidadi che dirano messa et farano la procession el di dela festa: Et per che el gestaldo nostro et compagni per tal cason non hano liberta de spender alcuna cosa dei danari dela schuola: Pero landera parte chel Gastaldo nostro e compagni che son al presente, et che de tempo in tempo sera habia liberta de spender per tal cason de i nei dela nostra schola fin ala summa de libre cinque de pizoli....' '...el di de la festa nostra di taiapiera se debia tuor trombeti afar la procession: Et el gastaldo habia liberta de poter spender nei diti trombeti de i beni dela nostra schola, fina ala summa de libri quatro de pizoli.' BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 30r-v.

Surviving expense accounts from the eighteenth century show the procession continued to be undertaken annually and typically record ‘expenses for the trumpets on the Feast day’ for ‘the four customary processions’ when the ‘large silver cross’ was paraded.³⁵

Although the *St Ambrose Polyptych* is undocumented, much can be discerned from its inscription (fig. 5.08), which is fairly typical of inscriptions appearing on objects and buildings commissioned by Venetian sodalities. These generally conclude with a phrase approximating: ‘...in tempo de [*named*] gastaldo / [*named*] scrivani / e confratelli [*date*]’. As the possibilities for monumental commemoration of the individual were limited in urban Venice, particularly for the *popolano* classes, the distinction which surely accrued to such inscriptions could have operated as a stimulus to artistic patronage on the part of corporation officer. However, these commemorative inscriptions were sufficiently prevalent for the State to perceive them as problematic attempts at self-aggrandisement, and legislation was brought banning chief officers of the *scuole grandi* from including their own names in confraternity epitaphs.³⁶ The inscription on the *St Ambrose Polyptych* indicates that the altarpiece was produced during the incumbency of Ambrogio Viviani as chairman (*gastaldo*): ‘...S[ER] AMBR[OGIO] VIVIANI CAST[ALD]O...’, and Pietro Muntin as confraternity secretary (*scrivani*): ‘...S[ER] PETRUS MUNTIN[US] SCRIVANI...’. Of course, we cannot be certain as to whether the figures depicted at the throne of the saint amount to portrait likenesses, and if the altarpiece was meant to represent up to two hundred members, it may well be that depictions of the brethren were generalised – it is notable that the group seems to comprise a representative sample of men of different ages. However, the part of the inscription naming Ambrogio Viviani appears to have been positioned so as to identify him as the figure heading the left-hand group of *confratelli*, and Pietro Muntin seems to be identified as the figure to the fore of the right-hand group.

Confirmation that Ambrogio Viviani indeed worked as a stonemason in Venice during the period when the altarpiece was made would corroborate the provenance of the polyptych. No records have been found which indubitably provide this

³⁵ ‘Spesi per le tronbe il giorno della Festa’; ‘...le quattro caminate come la consuetudine’; ‘la Croce granda d’Argento’ ASV, Arti, b. 710, 25v (1771), 41v (1776), (1794), respectively.

³⁶ P.F. Brown (1988), p. 225, noted *guardiani grandi* were forbidden to include their names in company epitaphs, or to sit on thrones in the meeting halls.

assurance, although the documents pertaining to work at San Zaccaria show that a certain 'Ambrogio' was working as a mason in the church in 1476, just a year before Bartolomeo signed the *St Ambrose Polyptych*.³⁷ Ambrogio was a relatively unusual name in Venice in this period, although, as Ambrose was patron of Milan, the name could have been more popular amongst resident Lombards.³⁸

As the officers' inscribed names are accompanied by representations of Saints Ambrose and Peter in the altarpiece, the inscription seems to conflate the men's identities with their respective name-saints; this follows what has already been observed about the identification of individuals with representations of their name-saints in altarpieces. Humfrey has convincingly hypothesised the substitution of the name-saints of *scuola* officers in place of the *Quattro Coronati* indicates the altarpiece was personally sponsored by them; this personal sponsorship would not have been an isolated example, as it is documented that Titian's *St Peter Martyr* altarpiece was also commissioned by officers of the eponymous *scuola*.³⁹ As to the apparent casual disregard of the sodality's true patron saints, it seems unlikely the Crowned Martyrs were the object of intense devotional feelings on the part of the membership; comparing the respective *mariegole* of the devotional *scolae communes* and the trades *scuole*, it is evident that the patron saints of the former were central to the sodalities' existence and rites, the object of heartfelt pious sentiment; by contrast, the patron saint of a trade was a more marginal and emblematic figure, functioning as a holy mascot. Typically for a trades *scuola*, the *tagliapietra* statutes refer to 'the four glorious martyrs' as their '*gonfalonieri*', or standard-bearers.⁴⁰

It is possible the officers of the *tagliapietra* confraternity were motivated to sponsor the altarpiece personally because the *scuola* lacked sufficient surplus funds. As closed, self-serving organisations, concerned with the regulation of labour markets and trade

³⁷ A mason named Ambrogio (no further names given) was paid to work on the pilaster of the ambulatory 'per lavorar el pilastro del sipurchio'. Cited Connell (1988), pp. 174-75. Membership lists for the *scuola* of the *tagliapietra* are not available for this period and just a few names of *gastaldi* or other members are to be found in the *mariegola*. Unfruitful searches for Ambrogio Viviani were carried out using indices of *testimenti*, as well as available membership lists of *Scuole Grandi*: ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 4; ASV Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, b. 12; ASV, Scuola Grande di S. Maria della Misericordia (Valverde), b. 5.

³⁸ The lengthy membership lists of the *scuole grandi* reveal the relative frequency of given names, of which Ambrogio appears very infrequently.

³⁹ Humfrey (1993), p. 114.

⁴⁰ 'Prima ditto Capitolo da et conciede licentia ai ditti de ditta schuola de poter i[n] la ditta soa giesa levar la ditta loro schuola soto el vocabulo di gloriosi martiri q[ua]tro coronati soi confaloneri'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 68v-69r.

protection, the trades *scuole* were not constituted to attract wealthy members from outside their trade, and were therefore not in a position to receive the generous private donations from which the *scolae communes* sometimes benefited. Moreover, the resources of the trades *scuole* could be stretched by the more pressing demands of welfare, sickness and housing for needy brethren. It has been observed that this general lack of resources is reflected in the middling quality of the altarpieces the trades *scuole* generally commissioned.⁴¹

Contemporary evidence suggests confraternity officers could be prompted to sponsor or propose the commissioning of new altarpieces in order to secure the inclusion of an adored saint; in the case of the *Trinity Altarpiece* for the Pistoia company of priests, the confraternity's treasurer was rewarded with the inclusion of a saint to whom he was especially devoted, in acknowledgement of his generous contribution for the altar's upkeep.⁴² And it seems more than casually coincidental that a certain Andrea Danzolo was *gastaldo* of the Venetian sand-merchants' confraternity when it finally agreed to commission a new altarpiece dedicated to their patron St Andrew (It. Andrea) in 1515 (Bissolo, *St Andrew Triptych*, S. Giovanni in Bragora). The recorded proposal to invest in a new altarpiece indeed centred on the decorous depiction of the saint, considered shabby in the existing altarpiece.⁴³

But the possible sponsorship of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* by the confraternity officers does not necessarily render the polyptych a private, unofficial donation of a 'devotional' painting not intended for use as an altarpiece, as has been implied elsewhere:⁴⁴ the format of the work is *prima facie* that of an altarpiece, whilst its corporate ownership is evident from its inscription citing the general brotherhood '...E CONF[RATELLI]...', and the figures grouped around the throne of St Ambrose. That the figures are exclusively male is perhaps more in keeping with the commission of a trade scuola than a devotional *scuola* where female membership was quite usual.⁴⁵ The uniform dress of the brotherhood depicted in the *St Ambrose* comprises a cap, and brown-grey cloak over a mauve tunic, distinct from the hooded *cape* worn by the *disciplinati* of the devotional *scuole*. The minuscule 'medieval' scale of the donors is striking, particularly in

⁴¹ Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 322.

⁴² Rubin (1994), p. 204.

⁴³ 'Alo altar nostro se trova una pala del nostro Confalonier Miser S. Andrea, tanto vechia e antiga chel non se congnosce se li sia depento sancto ne sancta: che è nostra gran vergogna', BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 194, 22v.

⁴⁴ Nepi Sciré (1991), p. 62.

⁴⁵ Mackenney (1994), p. 393.

comparison with the relatively large and individualised donors found in the 1475 *Misericordia Triptych*. However, the commissioners of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* would have probably considered the 'medieval' scale of the donors quite normative, as it was still customary for a saint's devotees to be depicted in this way in the numerous lapidary reliefs adorning the properties of the Venetian *scuole* (fig. 4.24). These minor sculptural works were necessarily carved by members of the local *scuola dei tagliapietra*, who operated a closed-shop.

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The substitution of the *Quattro Coronati* by Ambrose, patron saint of Milan, may have had a political as well as personal dimension, reflecting a period of internecine strife in the confraternity between the minority Venetians and the majority foreigners. Since the second decade of the fifteenth century, foreign masons, mostly Lombards, had migrated to Venice for work; the later fifteenth century saw a particularly important influx of Lombard masons, some of whom were employed on the Ducal Palace under Antonio Rizzo;⁴⁶ for three decades after the death of Bartolomeo Bon (c.1467), the leading architects and sculptors in the city were foreigners, including Lombards Antonio Rizzo and Pietro Lombardo, and the masons' confraternity came under foreign domination.⁴⁷ Relations between the natives and foreigners were sufficiently fraught for the two sides to take their grievances to supervisory State bodies on several occasions. In 1474 native craftsmen complained: 'the said trade [is] in the hands of men who are not from the Lands of the Venetians and neither do they bring good will to them [the Venetians]...'.⁴⁸ In 1486 Lombard masons successfully appealed to the State *Collegio*, complaining the Venetians were drawing up a statute to forbid foreigners running workshops and hiring apprentices.⁴⁹ And in 1491 the aggrieved natives protested to the *Provveditori di Comun*:

The foreigners, that is the Milanese and [those from] alien lands, number one hundred and twenty-six. [Added to which] there are at present about fifty *fanti*, who are from foreign lands⁵⁰ ...and we Venetians and people from [Venetian] subject territories...are only about forty

⁴⁶ Connell (1988), pp. 76-77.

⁴⁷ Connell (1988), chapter 6, pp. 72 ff.

⁴⁸ 'el dito mestier [sta] nele man de homini che non sono dele terre de Venetiani, ne ad quelli portano amor...'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 31v.

⁴⁹ See Connell (1988), p. 76, on this ruling.

⁵⁰ *Fanti* were fully-trained masons who did not operate their own workshop but were employed in that of another master.

in number...and because of this we ask order in our elections that when the chapter is formed that it includes as many of our Venetians, or indeed those from territories subject to our *Signoria*, as Milanese, so that [they] don't pass the *scuola* leadership and other official posts exclusively amongst themselves; and so that our statutes and ordinances are not wrecked...⁵¹

The conflict continued for another fifteen years or so, with the Lombards eventually out-manoeuvring the Venetian contingent to gain the upper hand in the confraternity.⁵²

Given the atmosphere between the opposing confraternity factions, it is possible that the commanding image of St Ambrose – patron saint of Milan and of the local sodality of Lombard nationals – embodied Milanese pride and defiance in the face of Venetian attempts to frustrate the ambitions of their more successful and numerous Lombard colleagues.

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In 1515 the *tagliapietra* contracted to move to the Church of S. Aponal.⁵³ The church conceded a burial ground and an altar in the church: '...the said chapter [of S. Aponal] concedes them an altar in the church, the one which used to have an altarpiece of St Nicholas, near the altar of St Gothard at the choir entrance. And they can adorn and build that altar as they please.'⁵⁴ For fifteen years or so after the move to S. Aponal, the *St Ambrose Polyptych* was probably employed as the altarpiece here, and would have functioned as the focus of the regular masses performed in the chapel, as stipulated in the *scuola's* ordinances:⁵⁵

⁵¹ 'I foresteri, cioè i Milanesi, et dele terre aliene, sono al numero de cento...XXVI: et li vano ad esso de presente fantida cercha cinquanta, i quali sono dele terre aliene...et nui Venetiani et subditi...siamo salvo cercha quaranta...Et per tanto domendemo ordene nele nostre lection che quando facemo capitolo siamo tanti deli nostri Venetiani, over dele terre subiecte a nostre Signorie, come Milanesi, over dele terre aliene, acio non se daga de man in man la gastaldaria et altri nostri officii: et che le lese et ordeni nostri non vadano in ruina...' BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 13r-13v, no. IIII. The Venetians also claimed that the foreigners were refusing to offer apprenticeships to Venetians. The Venetians' request for equal representation was approved.

⁵² On the eventual resolution of the conflict see Connell (1988), p. 79; BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 34r-v; Gentili (1988), p. 100.

⁵³ 'la...schuola habia deliberado per la grande incomodita chela sostiene partirse da S. Zuan Evangelista: et cum invention desiderio et volunta de tutti loro...de drezar et far la ditta schuola nela...giesa de Sant'Aponal'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 68v.

⁵⁴ '...dicto Capitolo li conciede un altar in giesa el qual antigamente soleva haver una pala de S. Nicolo apresso laltar de S. Gotardo per intrar in chore. Et quel altar possino adornar et fabricar come li parera'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 69r.

⁵⁵ BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 69r.

Item: The said Chapter [of the church of S. Aponal] is obliged to sing High mass at the said altar every fourth Sunday in the month, with the Deacon and subdeacon and organs, and to parade around the *campo* of S. Aponal

Item: to say every Tuesday Low mass at their above-mentioned altar, and then after the saying of the Low mass, to go to their tombs, and say the *Deprofundis* for the souls of all the dead brothers of the said *scuola*.

Item: the said Chapter is obliged on their feast-day [of the *Quattro Coronati*] which [falls] on the eighth day of November, to sing the High mass for the first and second vespers. And to parade solemnly around the above-mentioned *campo*.⁵⁶

As Humfrey and Mackenney observe, the transfer of a *scuola* to a new church was a stimulus to commission a new chapel altarpiece; in the case of the stonemasons, who now seemed to have settled their internal grievances, the anomalous iconography of the *St Ambrose* altarpiece may have provided a further compelling reason to act.⁵⁷ On 18 May 1529 it was duly decided to 'set aside ... subscription monies...to be spent on the building of an altar...'.⁵⁸ The wording of this resolution shows that it is not significant that any earlier decision to commission an altarpiece from Bartolomeo Vivarini was overlooked in the *mariegola*, except that this omission supports the hypothesis that the polyptych was funded by private donation, and was not therefore the occasion of extraordinary fund-raising. For the 1529 resolution was not concerned with the decision or motives for the erection of an altar, but rather with subscription rates and safe custodianship of funds; the altar is mentioned only in passing, and its form, iconography, materials, cost and so forth must have been recorded elsewhere in lost sources (surviving account books date only from the later eighteenth century.)⁵⁹

The new church altar was altogether more appropriate for the stonemasons' chapel than

⁵⁶ Item Ditto Capitolo se obliga de cantar al ditto altar ogni quarta Domenega de mexe una messa solenne cum Diacono e subdiacono et organi, et far la procession intorno el campo de Sant Aponal.

Item dir ogni marti una mesa pizola a lartar suo preditto: et dapoi ditta la messa pizola andar sopra le sue arche, et dir el Deprofundis per lanima de tutti i defuncti fradelli de ditta schuola.

Item el ditto Capitolo se obliga el zorno dela sua festa che, a adi otto Novembrio cantar el primo el segundo vespro, la messa solenne: Et far la procession solenne atorno el compo ut supra. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 69v.

⁵⁷ On the tendency of the *scuole* to commission a new altarpiece on re-location, see Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 322.

⁵⁸ 18 May 1529 'Landera parte che de cetero tutti gastaldi che per tempora sarano debbiano de la luminarie li sarano date p[er] i maestri, et lavoranti de larte metter de quelle de ilavoranti soldi otto, et de quelle de i maestri soldo sedese, in una casseleta da esser spesi nella fabricar del altar . La qual casseleta haver debbi chiave tre, de le qual habbi una el Gastaldo'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 44v.

⁵⁹ BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 44v.

the *St Ambrose Polyptych*. The front of the *mensa* was decorated with reliefs of the Crowned Martyrs, numbering five as in the painting attributed to Catena which slotted into the central section of the altar-back, and was flanked by lively carvings of Saints Peter and Paul. In oval medallions the hand-tools of the trade were carved in relief. So the flamboyant altar, and its rather dull companion painted panel, not only exalted the “correct” patron saints, but, executed in the latest classical Roman taste and extravagantly crafted in coloured and white marbles, it also served to advertise the skills, materials and tools employed in the masons’ art.

The more old-fashioned altarpiece by Bartolomeo must have been demoted on the installation of the new church altar in 1529, and was perhaps hung to one side of the new altar. Sansovino was perhaps referring to the *St Ambrose Polyptych* when he noted: ‘Antonio Vivarini left [at S. Aponal] several works by his hand [dated] 1470, but [they have been] consumed by the years.’⁶⁰ The cited date is late for Antonio, and could well be a misquotation of ‘1477’ inscribed on the *St Ambrose Polyptych* – Sansovino habitually confused the Vivarini and also mis-recorded inscriptions, for instance he attributed Antonio with Bartolomeo’s *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* in the Frari, and misread the inscription on the great *pala* of *St Ambrose* by Alvise, which he said was by ‘Guarino a painter from Milan’.⁶¹ The reference to ‘several works’ by Antonio at S. Aponal could indicate there were a few superannuated fifteenth-century altarpieces about the walls, or that the *St Ambrose* had been partially dismantled so it appeared as several distinct panels. Although the poor condition of the work(s) noted by Sansovino does not accord with the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, its panels could well have blackened through a century of exposure to candle-smoke.

As early as 1514 the *tagliapietra* had resolved to establish their own premises; recorded with characteristic hyperbole the *mariegola* reveals this was as much a question of honour as convenience.⁶² It was perhaps the concession of the church of S. Aponal of ‘a

⁶⁰ ‘Antonio Viuarino del 1470 vi lasciò diuerse opere di sua mano: ma consumate da gli anni.’ Sansovino (1998), pp. 184-85.

⁶¹ At the Frari Sansovino (1998), p. 188, noted ‘...vi dipinse anco Antonio Viuarino la palla della seconda (*sic*) cappella verso la Sagrestia...’, presumably intending the *Ca’ Bernardo* altarpiece. He misread the inscription on the altarpiece by Alvise Vivarini and Marco Basaiti: ‘Guarino pittor Milanese, & finita da Marco Basaito’. For other examples of Sansovino’s confusion of Vivarini family members, see the entry on San Giovanni in Bragora, *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶² ‘El forzo di mestieri de questa terra anchora che i siano piu infimi che el nostro hanno qualche reduto dove ali soi bisogni pono congregarse et far tutte le cose che sono per beneficio dele arte loro excepto che questa nostra Et acio che non possiamo esser imputati de negli gentia overo di pocho provvedimento e Ingegno; Ritrovandosi al presente ...danari in banche, li quali com a tutti e manifesto melio stariano in qualche loco segnro che neli banchi: per che adqual che tempo poriano perderse como havemo gia fatto

place where an *albergo* can be erected' which attracted the masons to the new location.⁶³ This notwithstanding, it seems new building works were not undertaken until 1586.⁶⁴ Once the *albergo* had been erected, the *St Ambrose Polyptych* could have been moved there, together with the church altar with the painting attributed to Catena of fifty years earlier, now superseded by an even newer altar with its depiction of the Crowned Martyrs and pilaster paintings of the Annunciation by the artist whose style resembled Andrea Schiavone's. It was not at all unusual for superannuated altarpieces to be displaced from church altar to meeting room, as the *scuole delle arti* usually prioritised embellishment of the publicly visible church altar above the decoration of their meeting rooms.⁶⁵

It is indicative of the ambitious acquisitiveness of the masons that the altarpiece by Bartolomeo, and subsequently that attributed to Catena, were substituted after only half a century on the church altar. However, these paintings were not left to languish unregarded, for the *albergo* was itself impressively furnished. Although the old guidebooks overlooked the *albergo*, we can have some idea of its interior, by now stripped of its paintings, from an inspector's report dated 1808: 'A large room with a Marble Altar / [Furnished] all around with wooden benches and backrests... Above, on one of the walls lateral to the altar, it seems there were once pictures on canvas which are no longer to be seen; and likewise with all the pictures around the border.'⁶⁶ It is evident from this document that the *albergo* was impressively decorated with a number of paintings which must have included the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, and the marble altar

deli altri: Et pero vada la parte che mette mistro Piero Lombardo Gastaldo con tutti i so compagni chel se debia comprar uno terren dove melio parera a quelli che sarano ellecti et Instituidi per questo capitolo sopra tal deliberation dove se debia fabrica una schuola in soler'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 36r-v, LVI.

⁶³ 'un luogo da poter fabricar un albergo'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 68v.

⁶⁴ According to Manno (1997), p. 57, the new building was erected in 1586, although the *tagliapietra* changed *albergo* again in 1635, moving to a building adjacent to the Church of Sant'Aponal in *Calle del Campaniel*, above the meeting room of the *Spezieri da Grosso*. See also BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 40v, CLXIII and 112r-114v.

⁶⁵ Humfrey (1993), p. 114 and p. 152.

⁶⁶ ASV, Direzione Demanio, b. 321, no. 162, 4r-v. 'Sopraluoghi dell'Economo Demaniale'. Venezia li 8 Aprile

[...]

5) Nella Scuola dei Tagliapietra in S. Apollinare

1. Locale grande con Altare di Marmo.

Spalliere e banche tutto all'intorno di albeo.

4. Inginocchiatorj, un Banco grande - Due Tramezzadure di legno con gradini.

In un Camerino dietro il Luogo sudetto un Armadio ad uso di Scrigno; un Cassabanco; ed un Armadio fitto nel Muro ad uso di Libreria - Dicesi il tutto venduto.

N.B. Sopra una della Facciate laterali all'Altare. Sembra vi esistessero delle Pitture in tela, che or più non si vedono; e così tutti li quadri del laterale del Contorno -

N.B. La proprietà di questo locale dicesi essere della chiesa di S. Apollinare, cui è contiguo -.

was presumably the church altar of 1529 with the work attributed to Catena. The missing 'pictures on canvas' flanking the altar were almost certainly those depicting the *Four Crowned Martyrs* recently published by Merkel (who indeed conjectured they could have adorned the *albergo*).⁶⁷

The Iconography and Formal Qualities of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*

Having attempted to reconstruct the early history of the polyptych as well as the commissioning patterns of the masons' *scuola*, the iconography and formal qualities of the altarpiece will now be examined in detail.

Saint Ambrose, like Augustine of the 1473 *St Augustine Polyptych* (fig. 2.14), was perhaps informed by the carved St Anthony Abbot appearing at the centre of Antonio Vivarini's *Pesaro Polyptych* of 1464 (figs. 5.09-5.10).⁶⁸ The similarity of the figures – excepting the luxurious vestments and jewelled mitre of the patriarch – is such that it seems Bartolomeo recorded the wooden St Anthony in a drawing, registering the impassive physiognomy, white beard, hieratic pose and the detailing of the right hand, raised in benediction and concealed in white tasselled glove, the left hand clasping the crozier's shaft. The self-conscious plasticity of St Ambrose, with swelling abdomen and projecting knees and vigorous gesture, asserts the painter's artifice in rendering three-dimensional figures more convincingly than the sculptor; paradoxically the figure's plasticity also enhances its iconic quality.

Besides its plasticity, the St Ambrose figure makes other subtle allusions to the stonemasons' craft. In contrast to the figure of the *St Augustine Polyptych*, depicted upon a wooden throne, St Ambrose is enthroned on marble or Istrian stone, the raw material of the masons' craft and the subject of much regulation in the *mariegola*.⁶⁹ The throne is severely classicising: a dentil border edges the cornice of the plinth, and two white spheres adorn the throne back, echoing the circle of Ambrose's halo (of which the gold leaf is largely abraded). The Patriarch's florid crosier also appears as though fashioned from marble. The whiteness of throne and crosier echo the robe worn by St Ambrose, which falls in crisp, stylised folds. St Ambrose's cope is edged with prophets bearing banderols which identify them (clockwise from top left) as: *Daniel*,

⁶⁷ Merkel (1999), p. 64.

⁶⁸ Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat. 6.

⁶⁹ Connell (1988) provides a good deal of information on the various types of marble and stone employed by the masons and the *mariegole* regulations regarding its importation and trade etc.

Zacharia, Job, Ysaia and Jeremia, figures similar to the prophets appearing on the pinnacles of earlier Vivarini frames. The remaining saints, appearing more human and less hieratic than Ambrose, stand on a pavement of green and white marble. The marble is 'cut' so its grain forms orthogonals with a vanishing point behind the throne of St Ambrose; the pavement recalling the traditional employment of marble revetment in Venice where a block of grained marble was sliced and the identically-marked slices were arranged with kaleidoscopic effects.

Whilst St Peter was included in the altarpiece as name-saint of the *scrivan* Pietro Muntin, it is likely St Paul was included as his pendant.⁷⁰ It is noteworthy that Saints Peter and Paul also appear prominently on the masons' marble altar of 1529, carved in the round and set in niches either side of the painting of the five *Crowned Martyrs* attributed to Catena. As the documents do not indicate that these saints held any official significance for the stonemasons' confraternity, their inclusion attests iconographic continuity with the *St Ambrose* altarpiece, and provides further circumstantial evidence that the polyptych was indeed owned by the *scuola*.

During his time working in the family shop, Bartolomeo had evidently assimilated most of his iconographic vocabulary; here Saints Peter and Paul are similar to equivalent figures appearing in the *Praglia* (Brera) or *Certosa* (Bologna) altarpieces of around three decades earlier, although, of course, the Peter and Paul of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* are more boldly and plastically rendered, with stronger physiognomies. The facial similarity of St Peter with the equivalent figure in the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* shows that there was no intention to guise St Peter as his namesake, *scuola* secretary Pietro Muntin. However, St Peter is more powerfully built than in the 1464 polyptych, indicative of the fuller renaissance figure favoured by the artist in his later career, whilst the decorative abstraction of hair, the drapery falling over Peter's protruding knee, and the curving furrows on the saints' brows signal Bartolomeo's increasing tendency to the abstraction and stylisation of the human form and physiognomy from the mid 1470s.

That said, a couple of insecure areas in the drawing of Saints Peter and Paul reveal the intervention of a less skilful assistant. Most noticeably, while the feet of St Paul are

⁷⁰ Discussing the frequent appearance of Sts Peter and Paul in altarpieces destined for Mendicant churches, Gardner (1994), p. 17, explains St Peter was representative of direct ties between the order and the Papacy, whilst St Paul would appear as Peter's 'natural equivalent'.

confidently executed, St Peter's left foot is too short and unconvincingly placed in relation to the body, and the right foot is a close imitation of St Paul's (figs. 5.11-5.12). Likewise, St Paul's left hand holding a book, is less finely drawn than the right. These minor awkwardnesses recall the more drastic anatomical problems with the figures in the *Conversano Polyptych* of two years earlier, perhaps undertaken exclusively by the same individual who assisted in a more minor way on the *St Ambrose Polyptych*.

While Saints Ambrose and Peter are effectively 'labelled' contemporaneously with the commemorative inscription to their namesakes Pietro Muntin and Ambrogio Viviani, it is generally assumed St Louis IX of France was recorded (without namesake guildsman) in the final part of the inscription: '...SANT. [LUDO]VIC[US]'. However, the *lacuna* allows for different readings: '...SANT [erased letters]VIC', with abbreviations signalled over the 'S', as well as the 'T' and 'C', so the inscription may have instead read: 'S[ER] ANT[ONIVS] VIC[ARIVS]', naming an incumbent *vicario* (an administrative assistant and occasional *gastaldo* deputy) in a form consistent with the other elements of the inscription [*Ser / name / office*], or alternatively 'S[ER] ANT[ONIVS DE [LUDO]VIC[VS] (although the omission of an image of a namesake St Anthony in the altarpiece would be anomalous).

Problems of the inscription aside, the inclusion of Saint Louis IX of France is significant, as this figure helps secure the provenance of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* – St Louis was patron saint of French stonemasons.⁷¹ Such was the itinerant nature of the craft, it is possible that this French tradition reached Venice via Lombard masons, or even that French masons were employed in Venice – the numerous foreigners who had entered the Venetian guild were described by the disgruntled natives as 'the foreigners, that is Milanese, and [those] from other alien lands'.⁷² Even if it could be shown that St Louis were included as an onomastic saint, in a Venetian context the selection of Louis IX over Louis of Toulouse is itself remarkable, as St Louis of Toulouse enjoyed great local popularity and was the preferred name-saint of those called Luigi, Ludovico or, in dialect, Alvisè.⁷³ The relative rarity of the figure of St Louis IX prompted Bartolomeo to a less formulaic, fresher rendering of this saint, whose regal status is connoted by his

⁷¹ According to Réau, Louis IX was a patron saint of French masons and carpenters because he had commissioned the construction of Sainte-Chapelle. He was also the patron of a number of trade guilds owing in part to his commission of the *Livres des Métiers*. Réau (1958), III, part ii, p. 816.

⁷² 'i forestieri, cioè milanexi, et dele terre aliene'. BMC, Classe IV (Mariegole), 150, 13r.

⁷³ For example Alvisè Storlato's (d. 1458) Chapel in SS Giovanni e Paolo was dedicated to St Louis of Toulouse. Bartolomeo's lost polyptych for this chapel would have provided a useful comparison with that of the *tagliapietra*, see introductory chapter here for Vasari's description of the lost work.

sceptre and orb, crown with jewelled fleur-de-lys finials, and the brocade gown woven with gold thread, the pattern competently modulated according to the fall of the drapery.

Unlike Bartolomeo's later versions of St Sebastian, where the saint is naked and pierced by arrows in the usual renaissance fashion, here the saint is aristocratically clad in fur-edged tunic and fur-lined cape, clasping the emblems of an arrow and sword. Assuming the correct identification of St Sebastian, this raises the question as to why Bartolomeo eschewed the more contemporary iconography.⁷⁴ The answer again lies in Vivarini tradition, with Bartolomeo having looked to an iconographically identical figure in Antonio's 1464 *Pesaro Polyptych* which is also identified as Sebastian (figs. 5.13-5.14).⁷⁵ Comparison of Bartolomeo's depiction of this saint in the *St Ambrose Polyptych* with the equivalent figure in Antonio's *Pesaro* altarpiece demonstrates Bartolomeo's greater accomplishment as an accurate and expressive draughtsman. In the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, Sebastian's gracefully inclined body, the slightly exaggerated elasticity of the youthfully turned legs, suggests a boyish femininity, and his physiognomy is equally skilfully rendered. As with Saint Lawrence of the *St Augustine Polyptych*, the young martyr's physiognomy was calculated to evoke tenderness in the beholder – his wide-eyed expression, pale complexion and golden curls rendering him angelic and vulnerable.

As no name-sake donor called Sebastian is commemorated in the polyptych's inscription, and there is no suggestion in the *mariegola* that St Sebastian had any official significance to the stonemasons' confraternity, the motive for Sebastian's inclusion in the polyptych may well have been his reputation as a thaumaturge. Of course, this is consonant with other contemporary sodalities, likewise not explicitly devoted to Saints Sebastian and Roch, which evidently stipulated images of one or both thaumaturges in their respective altarpieces.

⁷⁴ An almost identical figure in the 1475 *Conversano* altarpiece is instead identified as Theodore (principal order, far right) Pallucchini (1962), p. 122, cat. 170; if the youthful saint in the *St Ambrose* polyptych were intended as Theodore this would have provided a Venetian 'balance' to the dominant patron saint of Milan. However, the saint in the *Conversano* altarpiece appears without the arrow, and the respective colours of tunic and cape are reversed, and so is probably not intended as the same saint. As to how Pallucchini identified the figure as Theodore in the *Conversano* altarpiece remains uncertain, as one might expect Theodore to be shown in armour, as in the window at SS Giovanni e Paolo, or with a dragon under his feet, as in the ancient composite statue mounted on one of the Piazzetta columns. On the development of the iconography of St Sebastian, see S. Mason-Rinaldi (1979).

⁷⁵ Pallucchini (1962), p. 112, cat. 110 and Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat. 6. However, after sight of Antonello's depiction of Sebastian in the 1478-79 *St Roch* altarpiece at San Zulian, Bartolomeo transformed his St Sebastian iconography. See chapter 6 here.

It was perhaps to confer visual variety on the polyptych that Bartolomeo depicted the five saints in the *St Ambrose Polyptych* as though exemplifying five ages of masculine piety. Against Sebastian's girlish youthfulness, Louis' relative maturity is indicated by the merest shadow of a furrow in his brow and a downy beard; Saints Paul and Peter are depicted in early and later middle-age respectively, and patriarch St Ambrose personifies the authority associated with age in gerontocracies such as the Church or, indeed, the Venetian Republic. This exclusively masculine array of saints reflects the male-only confraternity where women existed at the margins only.⁷⁶

It is worth suggesting that the exceptionally sculptural quality of Bartolomeo's style may have appealed to the masons' taste. The high colour, the juxtaposition of the deliberately artificial, such as traditional gold haloes and backgrounds, against the hyper-real, such as the *trompe l'oeil* feet of Saints Peter and Paul protruding through the picture plane, and the effect of the compartmentalised frame, would have lent the figures the aspect of polychromed sculpted figures set in niches, as seen in contemporary carved altarpieces.

Vivarini workshop tradition must have encouraged the young Bartolomeo to engage with sculpture – Holgate has recently emphasised the sculptural quality in the work of Antonio and Giovanni d'Alemagna, and the Vivarini had, of course, frequently collaborated closely with woodcarvers on mixed-media altarpieces such as Antonio's aforementioned *Pesaro Polyptych*, or the 1452 *Annunciation* (unknown sculptor with Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini, Fondazione Cagnola, Gazzada).⁷⁷ Visual evidence demonstrates Bartolomeo's habitual use of contemporary sculpture as a source for his monumental figures – as we have seen, not only were the central figures of the *St Augustine* and *Ambrose* polyptychs informed by the sculpture at the centre of Antonio's *Pesaro Polyptych*, but Bartolomeo's 1464 depiction of the Baptist was influenced by Donatello's 1438 sculpture, his *Virgin of Mercy* was suggested by Bon's sculptural relief of the same subject, Rizzo's altars at St Mark's basilica became the throne of the city's patron in the 1474 altarpiece, and it will be shown that a Pietro Lombardo relief was the source for Bartolomeo's depictions of the Man of Sorrows (chapter 7). The

⁷⁶ In the *tagliapietra* legislation women are most often referred to only as a means of defining the national status of their spouses (because foreign masons domiciled in Venice together with their families were afforded the status of naturalised Venetians for the purposes of guild rules.) See Connell (1988), chapter 6, on issues of nationality and the *tagliapietra*.

⁷⁷ Holgate (2001), pp. 19-22.

sometimes Germanic forms and high colouring of Bartolomeo's works also recall the polychrome wooden figure sculpture of the mountainous regions north of Venice, examples of which were brought to the city, though relatively few examples remain today.

Although there is no documentary evidence that Bartolomeo worked in anything other than the painted medium, his facility and feel for the plastic was such that it is worth asking whether he had experimented with sculptural relief during his early period; in 1457 the aggrieved guild of the *intaiadori* (wood carvers) alleged that painters were encroaching on their business by producing relief sculptures in gesso, stone and clay.⁷⁸ Of course, Pizolo's terracotta altarpiece made for the Ovetari chapel (1449-53 Eremitani, Padova) is a well-known example of such work in relief made by a painter, and was informed by one of the most important sculptural projects of the period, Donatello's high altar at the Santo;⁷⁹ given his significant involvement with the Ovetari chapel, Bartolomeo would have known this altarpiece well, and may even have seen Pizolo make it.

§

The *St Ambrose Polyptych* was indubitably an impressive and magnificent work, but its polyptych format seems remarkably conservative, most notably when compared to Antonello's *San Cassiano* altarpiece (1475-76, central fragment, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) which could have been installed as Bartolomeo set to work on the polyptych. Although Bartolomeo could hardly have failed to notice this astonishing work, the polyptych format, gold background, compartmentalised full-frontal saints of the *St Ambrose* altarpiece remain more reminiscent of Mantegna's *St Luke* altarpiece of a generation earlier (1453, Brera, Milan). Yet Bartolomeo's precocious experimentation with the single-*pala* – most recently and successfully in the 1476 *Bari Altarpiece* – demonstrates that he was not slow to adopt the new format and it must therefore have been his clients who directed him to make a traditional polyptych. In so doing the *tagliapietra* were fairly typical of the trades *scuole*; as Humfrey and Mackenney have noted, as late as the 1520s the *bombardieri* commissioned a polyptych-format altarpiece from Palma Vecchio (*St Barbara and Saints*, c. 1523-34, S.

⁷⁸ The guild dispute of 1447 is recorded in Favaro (1975), p. 68. See also below.

⁷⁹ Humfrey (1993), pp 174-75.

Maria Formosa).⁸⁰ Further, the artist might have considered the vertical format of a single-*pala* ill-suited to the dimensions of the original chapel at S. Giovanni Evangelista – as noted above, the horizontality of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* indicates the chapel was fairly wide but endowed with a relatively low vault.

Paradoxically, the frame of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, with its rounded arches and renaissance motifs, was more up-to-date than the panels it housed; this discrepancy was perhaps symptomatic of the working experience of the *tagliapietra* who, as architects and sculptors, habitually employed the Tuscan and Lombardesque decorative vocabulary. An equivalent discrepancy – more of quality – is found in the painted and sculpted elements of the 1529 altar made for the masons' chapel at S. Aponal, where the upper section of the marble altar formed an extravagant cornice to the relatively small, pedestrian picture at its centre; it is also noteworthy that the form of the 1529 altar is also essentially that of a polyptych. In this case, the splendid altar itself was necessarily produced by members of the sodality, no doubt motivated to produce a work which afforded honour to both the trade and personally to the craftsmen who made it, and who may well have offered their skill at a favourable price. Conversely, the mediocre quality of the inserted painted panel is consistent with what has already been observed about the quality of trades' *scuole* altarpieces generally.⁸¹

The *Bragora Altarpiece* of 1478

Almost coeval with the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, and similarly conservative in its format and employment of gold ground, is the small, but fine altarpiece known as the *Bragora Triptych* (fig. 5.17). It seems apposite to deal with this altarpiece here, as the ensemble was very likely also the fruit of the collaborative partnership between Bartolomeo and Jacopo da Faenza.

In its present state the *Bragora Altarpiece* comprises three panels: the Madonna Enthroned in the central panel (130 x 48 cm) with John the Baptist (left) and St Andrew (right) (both 130 x 45 cm); the central panel is inscribed: BARTOLOMEVS VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PINXIT 1478. The circumstances surrounding the commission remain mysterious, although it seems most likely that members of the patrician Navagero

⁸⁰ Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 322.

⁸¹ Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), pp. 317-18, and p. 322.

family commissioned it for their chapel of the Virgin Mary, the first on the right as one enters the church from the *campo* (fig. 5.18).⁸² When Ridolfi saw the altarpiece in the mid-seventeenth century, he noted it was completed by a small upper panel on which appeared '...the dead Saviour', which Zanetti also saw in 1771, when he remarked the work was so blackened he could not examine it. The altarpiece evidently underwent a major intervention around 1800, for by the time Moschini saw the 'beautiful picture' in 1815 it seems to have been more legible, but had lost its *cimasa* – Moschini stated categorically that it comprised 'three panels'.⁸³ It is likely that it was during the early-

⁸² Humfrey and Mackenney (1986), p. 318 and p. 325, hypothesised that the work was commissioned by the sand-merchants' *scuola*, as its patron saint was Andrew. But Humfrey later noted (1993), p. 327, n. 79, that the confraternity replaced its 'old' altarpiece in 1515, describing an ancient and dilapidated panel in which St Andrew was apparently the main subject, unlikely to be identifiable with the work by Bartolomeo. Weil's suggestion in Weil and Terranova (1994), p. 29, that the altarpiece was made for the chapel of the Giustiniani family, which was dedicated to the Virgin, falls because the *juspatronatus* of the chapel commenced from 1507.

The altar in the Navagero chapel was recorded in the 1581 Apostolic Visitation as being dedicated to the Virgin: 'Altare cum capella Sanctae Mariae familiae Navageriae, satis ornatum...', cited Tramontin (1967), pp. 530-31. Moreover, Sansovino (1998), p. 36, associated Bartolomeo's name with the 'cappella de Navaieri, con l'altare della Croce la lavorarono Bartolameo Vivarino, & Gian Battista da Conigliano', but Sansovino's muddled account with its incorrect reference to Cima's authorship of the Navagero 'altar of the cross' suggests he could have confused the altarpiece in the Navagero chapel with Cima's *Constantine and Helen* (1501-3). However, reassurance can be gained from Stringa's emendation to Sansovino's text (1604), p. 107a, for although Stringa repeated certain of Sansovino's errors, he clearly differentiated the two works: 'Del medesimo [Cima] anco è la paletta a man manca di Santa Helena, che fece trovar la croce di Christo: & l'altra paletta a man dritta a corrispondenza di quella, ove dipinto si vede Christo risuscitato, fù fatta da Luigi Vivarino... La cappella de' Navaieri, con l'altar della Croce la dipinsero Bartolomeo Vivarino, & il sudetto Gio. Battista da Conegliano'. The mistaken title of the chapel may be owed to the Man of Sorrows which originally crowned the altarpiece.

Members of the Navagero family were closely and influentially involved with the Bragora church in the late-fifteenth century. In the role of church procurator, Bernardo Navagero, a parishioner, administered parish funds with the parish priest. Archivio Parrocchiale di San Giovanni in Bragora, b. 1; also Humfrey (1980), p. 351. The inclusion of John the Baptist in Bartolomeo's altarpiece, to whom the church of San Giovanni in Bragora was dedicated, was entirely fitting for a family so closely associated with its parish church, and the Virgin enthroned in Bartolomeo's altarpiece was evidently suitable for a chapel dedicated to the Virgin; St Andrew may well have been a name saint, as Andrea was a name traditional in the Navagero family.

The Navagero chapel is presumed to be associated with the late-fifteenth-century remodelling of the church, but I have been unable to ascertain whether the family had *juspatronatus* of any chapel there when Bartolomeo made his altarpiece. Unfortunately the account book for the relevant period 1460-1485 (held together with other papers in b. 1 of the parish archive) was missing when I visited the archive, although Humfrey (1980), p. 351 and p. 362, n. 59, noted 'The parish did not ... finance the decoration of the various other side-altars in the newly-built church, which as was customary were in private hands. This probably explains why there is no mention in the documents of ... a triptych by Bartolomeo Vivarini of 1478' and 'the documents...nowhere mention the Navagero Chapel'.

⁸³ '...nella chiesa di san Giovanni in Bragora [l'opera] con la Vergine nel mezzo ed il Bambino, e dale parti san Giovanni Battista e sant' Andrea, e nella cima il morto Salvatore'. Ridolfi (1999), p. 54. The pinnacle was also noted by Zanetti (1972), p. 27: '...la tavola con la Madonna, S. Giambatista, e Sant' Andrea in campi d'oro, e Cristo morto nell'alto, che sta nella cappella vicina alla sagristia. Io vidi questa Pittura; ma non potei esaminarla per essere molto annerita'. Instead Moschini described the work as having only three panels: '...una bella tavola di *Bartolommeo (sic) Vivarini* in tre compartì. In quell di mezzo vi è N.D., negli altri due i santi Andrea e Giambattista in campi d'oro...'. Moschini (1815), I, p. 82.

nineteenth century intervention that the altarpiece frame was reduced to the simple cornice and spandrels it comprises today.

The surviving spandrels are similar to those on the *St Ambrose Polyptych* and the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, indicating the hand of a single carver (or shop) in these works – identified as Jacopo da Faenza in the 1477 polyptych.⁸⁴ As described by Ridolfi and Zanetti, in its complete state the *Bragora Altarpiece* must have resembled the form of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, although it is about a third smaller as befits the more modest dimensions of the Bragora church. Given the formal qualities of other altarpieces associated with Jacopo da Faenza, it is likely the *predella* of the *Bragora Altarpiece* comprised renaissance-style relief moulding, and was perhaps punctuated with roundels comprising family arms, as in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*; the entablature and pilasters would also have been decorated in renaissance style moulding. A pair of angels or other carved figures could have flanked the small upper panel, as in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*.

Griffiths argued that the lost Man of Sorrows panel of the *Bragora Altarpiece* could be identified with a panel published by Pallucchini in 1967 (fig. 5.16; 50 x 50 cm, Private Collection, Bergamo), observing the measurements of the Bergamo panel were correct and the surviving spandrels of the frame were similar to those in the *Bragora Altarpiece*. However, there are important objections which instead indicate that the Bergamo panel has no relation with the *Bragora Altarpiece*. Firstly, the Bergamo panel is two centimetres wider than the central panel of the *Bragora Altarpiece* over which it was supposedly set. Second, the 'assurance' given by the matching spandrels is spurious, because several frames from this period in Bartolomeo's oeuvre comprise similar spandrels. Moreover, the spandrels are not identical: the spandrels of the *Bragora Altarpiece* are formed of three acanthus leaves radiating from a fruit-like pommel, whereas in the Bergamo panel, an open, round-petalled flower appears at the centre of the foliage. Finally, and most significantly, the execution of the Bergamo panel is simply too laboured, its drawing too crude, in comparison with the surviving panels of the *Bragora Altarpiece*. Comparison of the Bergamo panel with the same subject from the 1482 *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 5.15), which is of similar quality to the *Bragora Altarpiece*, reveals a great disparity in the quality of the treatment, from the

⁸⁴ It should be noted that the more abstracted form of the spandrels of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* could indicate these were restorations.

trompe l'oeil loin cloth, the accurate and subtly modulated musculature, and the pathetic face of the dead Christ in the Bernardo version, to their summary and clumsy counterparts in the Bergamo panel. It is fair to suppose, therefore, that the *cimasa* of the *Bragora Altarpiece* remains lost and that the Bergamo panel came from one of the polyptychs made with significant studio assistance for export.⁸⁵ Indeed, Zeri linked the Bergamo *Man of Sorrows* with the 1483 *Andria Altarpiece* (fig. 8.06), the central panel of which is certainly compatible in its dimensions (118 x 50 cm).⁸⁶

It is possible the patron of the *Bragora Altarpiece* knew the *Polyptych of the Madonna* made in 1464 for Domenico Diedo for his chapel at the Certosa, as the surviving panels of the *Bragora Altarpiece* depict subjects found in three of the five panels of the polyptych. However, comparison of the treatment of the respective figures provides a good indication of the development of Bartolomeo's style from his early to mature periods. Whereas the Baptist appears gaunt, almost emaciated in the *Polyptych of the Madonna*, along the lines suggested by Donatello's *John the Baptist* (figs. 1.09-1.10), the equivalent figure in the *Bragora Altarpiece* is more wiry and muscular. Here St. Andrew is depicted volumetrically, similar to his counterpart in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, and the Virgin is more monumentally proportioned. If the conservative format and gold background is retained in the *Bragora Altarpiece*, its frame – like that of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* – was more up-to-date, comprising apertures with rounded arches and renaissance motifs in the relief moulding. Even the Virgin's throne is more classical in its form, described in a heavier, more Roman, classicising style, than the ornate thrones depicted in earlier altarpieces such as the *St Mark Triptych* or the *Naples Altarpiece* (fig. 7.13).

Commercial Matters

Bartolomeo must have been attentive to the publicity and new business his boldly signed works could generate when they were on public view in local city-centre churches. It may also have been a question of personal honour, and desire for esteem on the part of his colleagues and competitors – evidently important values amongst craftsmen, judging from their *mariegole* – that Bartolomeo's local works were of the highest quality. In the two known instances where he produced altarpieces for local *scuole piccole* he was as attentive to quality as for his patrician clients. And, whilst

⁸⁵ Pallucchini (1967), p. 202, also supposed the panel came from a lost polyptych.

⁸⁶ Zeri (1988), p. 164.

workshop assistance is not absent from Bartolomeo's later Venetian altarpieces, there is a gulf in quality between these and the polyptychs made for export during the 1480s, as clearly evidenced by the disparity between the Bernardo and Bergamo versions of the Man of Sorrows. The assistant who produced the Bergamo panel was evidently the same individual who took a leading role in the making of the export altarpieces, but no surviving Venetian work indicates that Bartolomeo allowed this recognisable hand equivalent responsibility in pieces destined for the important home market.

Just as Bartolomeo had exploited his connections through the Scuola Grande di San Marco to gain several important contracts, so it seems he profited from contacts with the Milanese community in Venice, connections which may have been initially made through professional association with Milanese sculptors, or indeed through the Scuola Grande. As well as the *St Ambrose Polyptych* for the masons' *scuola*, it is possible Bartolomeo was commissioned to produce the above-noted lost triptych, the *Virgin and Child with Saints Ambrose, John the Baptist, Protasius and Gervase* for the *albergo* of the Milanese nationals' *scuola*, described by Zanetti and Boschini. Of course, at the turn of the century, the same confraternity returned to the Vivarini name – now represented by Alvise following his uncle's death – for the commission of their impressive new altarpiece for their chapel at the Frari (fig. 5.19).

Given the significance of the frame to the discussion of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* and its common authorship with the *Bragora Altarpiece* frame posited here, it is opportune to now consider more generally the construction of altarpiece frames and associated business practices. It is notable that most of the surviving frames produced for Vivarini altarpieces may be divided into groups sharing similar and distinct characteristics, and thus attributable to particular carvers (or their workshops). This indicates that the Vivarini generally operated established collaborative relationships with their woodcarver colleagues (see appendix 8). However, as it is also evident that the carvers overlapped chronologically, whilst these relationships were stable, they were not exclusive, as would have been the case were carvers actually present in the Vivarini shop.

It may be significant that the earliest altarpiece in each identifiable group is inscribed with the name of the carver, as though to mark the establishment of a new collaborative partnership. Perhaps the most important and long-term collaboration the Vivarini shop

enjoyed with any one carver (or his shop) was that with Lodovico da Forlì, indicated by the number of frames spanning a period of over thirty years which share similar characteristics: they are prodigiously and elaborately sculpted with a network of delicate tracery covering all surfaces; characteristic architectonic motifs include polygonal pilasters, trefoil stepped gables, fleshy, curled foliate crockets, foliate finials from which prophets may emerge; a holy figure or group arises above the gable of the central panel to crown the whole altarpiece. As far as we know, the Vivarinis collaborated with Lodovico da Forlì for the first time in 1443 when Lodovico signed the *Madonna of the Rosary Polyptych*. The continued association between the Vivarini and Lodovico was documented when he witnessed a will together with Antonio Vivarini in 1453, and another in 1466, that of Cristina, who lived in Antonio's house; it is notable that Lodovico, like Antonio and Bartolomeo, lived in the parish of S. Maria Formosa. From shared characteristics in the altarpiece frames, it is possible to hypothesise that Lodovico also collaborated on works including the 1450 Bologna *Certosa Polyptych*, as well as Antonio's *Pesaro Polyptych*, Bartolomeo's *Polyptych of the Madonna* and the brothers' *Osimo Polyptych* (fig. 0.13; Palazzo Municipale, Osimo) all of 1464.⁸⁷ The frames of later Vivarini altarpieces also have characteristics in common with the latter group – but it is impossible to tell whether the frames of Bartolomeo's *St Mark Triptych* of 1474, the *Zumpano Triptych* (1480, San Giorgio, Zumpano), the *Arbe Polyptych* now in Boston (fig. 6.11; 1485) and Alvise's *Montefiorentino Polyptych* (fig. 1.11) were also made by Lodovico, who by then would have been rather elderly. The shared features of the two groups of frames could alternatively be explained by the Vivarini's collaboration with younger woodcarvers who trained in Lodovico's *bottega*.

Cristoforo da Ferrara was another carver who collaborated with the Vivarini on several projects over an extended period. His name was inscribed on the 1444 *Coronation of the Virgin* (S. Pantalon, Venice), on a lost altarpiece of 1446 (ex. SS Cosma e Damiano, Venice), and on the heavily-restored frame of the 1447 *Nativity Polyptych* (fig. 0.05; National Gallery, Prague) by Antonio and Giovanni d'Alemagna.⁸⁸ On stylistic grounds it seems fair to suggest Cristoforo da Ferrara also made the frame of Antonio and Bartolomeo's 1458 *Arbe Polyptych* (S. Eufemia, Arbe); the surviving frames share

⁸⁷ Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 260 n. 26 and p. 264 n. 34; Griffiths (1976), p. 6 and p. 38 n. 13. See also appendix 8.

⁸⁸ Sansovino (1998), p. 254: 'una palla posta a man destra nel mezzo d'essa [chiesa]: & fu dipinta l'anno 1446. da i Vivarini. & l'ornamento d'intaglio fu fatto da Christoforo Ferrarese.' The credibility of Sansovino's account is attested by the specificity and chronologically apt reference to Cristoforo Ferrara, although it is doubted by Holgate (1999), p. 129 n. 1 (following Martinioni). The most likely explanation is that the work was extant in 1581, but had been broken up before Martinioni could see it in 1663.

similar features – elongated foliate crockets finished in open flowers, pilasters set between panels surmounted by pyramidal finials, and wide-angled ogee gables finished in fleur-de-lys finials.

Finally, of course, Jacopo da Faenza's name appears on the 1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych*. The renaissance-style frames of Jacopo da Faenza may be associated with at least four works that Bartolomeo made over the period 1477 to 1483 (assuming the Bergamo *Man of Sorrows* formed part of the *Andria Polyptych*), as noted above. The inscription on the 1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych* apparently marks the start of the collaboration between Bartolomeo and Jacopo, and it is the first of Bartolomeo's altarpieces known to have been encased in a frame decorated with the *all'antica* renaissance motifs typical of Jacopo's work.⁸⁹ Jacopo's commission from Giovanni Bellini (or the Pesaro family) for the frame of the 1488 *Frari Triptych*, demonstrates that his work was prized by the most prominent artists and their clients.

The visual and documentary evidence runs contrary to the practice described by Gilbert where an altarpiece commissioner typically ordered a polyptych direct from a wood-carver and later, in a separate contractual arrangement, engaged an artist to paint it.⁹⁰ As Humfrey has stressed, working practices in Venice were varied, and a painter could collaborate closely over a long period with a carver, as is well illustrated by the case of Andrea da Murano who was perhaps senior partner to his carver brother Gerolamo in their shared workshop.⁹¹ Certain highly integrated works, such as the San Zaccaria altarpieces by Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Lodovico da Forlì, indicate *prima facie* that painters and carver necessarily entered a close working arrangement, however that relationship was formalised; and the correspondence in motif between frame and painted panel seen in Bartolomeo's *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* similarly points to his active collaboration with Jacopo da Faenza. And a few recorded cases demonstrate that painted and carved elements of a work could be executed by the same individual; the guild dispute of 1457 between the respective *scuole* of the *intaiadori* (carvers) and *dipintori* (painters) involved accusations and counter-accusations of

⁸⁹ Although the *Bari* altarpiece of the previous year was also presented in a renaissance frame, what remains of that frame is severely classicising and it lacks the *all'antica* motifs and scrolling, organic mouldings associated with Jacopo; although it should be noted that the *Bari* frame was evidently subject to invasive repairs in the eighteenth century and has suffered significant losses.

On the grounds of the Lombardesque decorative detail in the 1465 *Naples* altarpiece, Humfrey has proposed that this work was also set in a classicising frame. Humfrey (1994), p. 16.

⁹⁰ Gilbert (1977), pp. 9ff.

⁹¹ Humfrey (1986), p. 72.

craftsmen appropriating the work due to members of the opposing trade. In 1459 the supervisory body finally ruled that the work of the opposing trades was so closely related that it was impossible to neatly differentiate them and in certain circumstances approved individuals would therefore be permitted to practise both.⁹²

The sparse documentary evidence indicates that Bartolomeo Vivarini was the principal contact for his altarpiece commissioners who negotiated with him directly about the whole work and presumably entrusted him to sub-contract the execution of the frame. As was observed in chapter 1, the commissioner of the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* made no direct payment for an altarpiece frame, though payments are listed to the artist for the altarpiece (and a woodcarver was in the commissioner's employ with regard to other decorative work in his chapel); and the surviving contract for the 1484 *Dormition of the Virgin* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) explicitly renders the artist responsible 'to make or have made' the altarpiece including its wooden frame which would be surmounted by a carved figure of St Michael.⁹³ It may be implicit in that contract that Bartolomeo would have designed the whole composition, but this does not always appear to have been the case. Rather, the contrast in style and motif between, say, the florid gothic frame of the 1474 *St Mark Triptych* and the renaissance frames associated with Jacopo da Faenza, indicates the respective carvers often worked fairly free of detailed direction from the artist.

The Early Reception of the *St Ambrose Polyptych*

Before concluding this chapter, it should be observed that the *St Ambrose Polyptych* was the final of three Venetian altarpieces Bartolomeo made in the 1470s which feature an hieratic, enthroned, centralised male saint in the company of other male saints (the others are, of course, the 1473 *St Augustine Polyptych* and the *St Mark Triptych* of 1474). In the hands of the next generation this type employed by Bartolomeo would evolve into a form of *sacra conversazione*, with the full-frontal male saint elevated at the centre of an all-male company of saints in a unified setting. This hieratic, commanding type was particularly favoured for the authoritative depiction of ecclesiastical saints, and may be distinguished from other contemporary arrangements of male saints,

⁹² The cases of Giovanni Bellini and Gasparo Moranzzone are cited by Griffiths, p. 6; on the guilds' dispute, see Favaro (1975), p. 68.

⁹³ '...dictus magister Bartholomeus promisit...pulcherrime et ornatissime ac laudabiliter constuere sive construi facere de lignamine cum intaleis circumcirca et cum uno Sancto Michaeli de intaleo a parte superiori et pingere factis et perfectis coloribus omnibus suis expensis unam palam ab altari ...'. Sambin (1964), pp. 41-42; see also concluding chapter and appendix 9 here.

where the principal figure is shown standing at the centre of the group, or instead was depicted more naturalistically, engaged in reading or writing. This latter solution had been adopted by Mantegna in the *St Luke* altarpiece (1454, Brera), and would be taken up by Sebastiano in the *San Giovanni Crisostomo* altarpiece (1510-11, S. Giovanni Crisostomo, Venice) and Giovanni Bellini with the *Delitti* altarpiece (1513, S. Giovanni Crisostomo).

Alvise Vivarini recalled his uncle's treatment of Saints Ambrose, Augustine and Mark when he planned his ambitious *St Ambrose Altarpiece* for the Frari; but Bartolomeo's hieratic male saints also informed Marco Basaiti's *St Peter Enthroned with Saints* (S. Pietro in Castello), Cima's *St Peter Enthroned with Saints John the Baptist and Paul* (Brera, Milan), Carpaccio's *St Thomas Aquinas Enthroned with Saints Marks, Louis of Toulouse and the donor's son (Alvise Licinio)* (Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart) (figs. 5.19-5.22). In these examples a patriarchal figure is depicted enthroned and full-frontal, although the rigid, sculptural figure of Bartolomeo's altarpieces is softened into a more naturalistic portrayal, with the figure shown in slight *contrapposto*, with a loosening and relaxation of the head in relation to the body, and a softening of fabric folds, according to the prevailing taste for greater naturalism in the depiction of figures and a softening in palette and form.

§

It was argued here that the stonemasons did indeed commission the *St Ambrose Polyptych*, a work which, aside from its anomalous iconography, was in other ways fairly typical of a commission on the part of a trade *scuola*. The acquisition marked the beginning of the sodality's purposeful rise as an honourable association of substance, beyond their function as a mutual-aid society; fairly typically for the more ambitious Venetian trades *scuole* in the renaissance period, the masons' guild sought to improve its standing, and thereby the 'honour' of the art, through permanent and ephemeral display, including the remarkable renewal of their church altar three times in little more than a century. However, it seems the fairly hasty substitution of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* in 1529 was not simply due to its old-fashioned style, but also because the altarpiece ill-befitted its purpose, being neither an advertisement of the masons' craft in the way the subsequent altar would be (as a work mainly of sculpted stone), nor an

appropriate depiction of the titular saints. Rather, the iconography of the *St Ambrose Polyptych* reflected a period of enmity in the confraternity's history, by including an image representative of the dominant foreign majority in the guild. The 'representation' of the guild officers, the likely sponsors of the altarpiece, by namesake saints is a phenomenon expressed eloquently in the calculatedly-ambivalent inscription on the altarpiece which fuses the identities of the *scuola* officers with the names of their patron saints. At the time of the commission the substitution of the stonemasons' titular saints for other holy figures was apparently acceptable to the members because of the emblematic, rather than devotional, status of patron saints of trades' *scuole* – a significance quite in contrast to the central importance of the figure of St Roch to members of the eponymous devotional *scuole*, established to rouse the intercessory powers of that saint, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Scuola di San Rocco at S. Eufemia and the *St Roch Altarpiece* (1480)

*'...in essa cita el non se ritroui algun angulo nel qual el nome de esso sancto non sia con tuto el cuore da chadauno invocato: honorato e celebrato per tali tanti e innumerable miracoli...'*¹

The surviving panels of Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece* are found in the parish church of S. Eufemia on the Giudecca, on the first altar to the right of the nave (figs. 6.01-6.02). The altar was formerly under the *juspatronatus* of a *scuola piccola* dedicated to St Roch (Rocco), probably founded in c. 1478 and suppressed in 1764.² Several old sources describe the altarpiece briefly, including Zanetti: 'In S. Eufemia on the Giudecca there is the panel [painting] by Bartolomeo...on the first altar on the right. It is divided into three compartments, which contain the figures of St Roch, St Sebastian and St Louis [of Toulouse] on gold ground'.³ The surviving central panel indeed depicts St Roch and an angel on a gold ground (138 x 59 cm), although the side panels of St Sebastian and Louis of Toulouse are lost. Overlooked by Zanetti, a semi-circular *lunette* depicting the Virgin and Child (0.99 x 0.60 m) remains *in situ* above the St Roch panel. The inscription on the altarpiece is now erased, but was noted by Moschini in 1815: BARTOLOMEVS VIVARINVS PINXIT 1480; the handling and style of the work confirm the accuracy of Moschini's record.⁴ The original frame of the altarpiece was replaced at an early date and its appearance went unrecorded.

Because the integrity of the altarpiece has been compromised, the first section here aims to 'reconstruct' its original appearance, and this is followed by discussion of the

¹ Scuola Grande di San Rocco, *Proemio della Mariiegola maior*, cited Tonon (1998), pp. 34-37.

² Suppression date cited Basaldella (2000), p. 79, no source supplied.

³ 'In Santa Eufemia alla Giudecca evvi la tavola di Bartolommeo rammentata dal Ridolfi, al primo altare alla dritta. E divisa in tre comparti, che contengono le figure di S. Rocco, di S. Sebastiano, e di S. Lodovico in campi d'oro.' Zanetti (1972), p. 26.

⁴ Inscription recorded by G. Moschini, see below, (1815), p. 352. The date is corroborated by E. Paoletti (1837), pp. 167-68.

context in which a devotional *scuola* dedicated to St Roch commissioned the altarpiece. Unfortunately, aside from the altarpiece itself, there are no contemporary documentary sources for the *scuola* (a sodality quite distinct from the eponymous Scuola Grande), and so evidence relating to comparable Venetian sodalities has been examined to arrive at suppositions about its scope and form. In contrast with the Venetian trades *scuole* described in the previous chapter, the primary purpose of *scolae communes* such as the Scuola di San Rocco was devotional, and veneration of the patron saint was central to the activities of the sodality. As the *scuola* at S. Eufemia was probably established as one of a number of civic and popular measures taken against the ferocious plague of 1478, the worst epidemic for at least fourteen years, the altarpiece programme will be considered in its particular relation to popular beliefs about the causes of plague and its possible remedies.

The Original Form of the *St Roch* Altarpiece

According to Basaldella, the lunette depicting the Virgin and Child originally comprised a sort of apotheosis of St Roch, as it supposedly showed 'the Saint amongst the clouds with the Virgin, crowned by angels.'⁵ This subject would have been entirely fitting thematically, although it is difficult to see how the putative missing figures were integrated compositionally with the Virgin and Child, who are shown frontally in a format repeated in the upper central panel of many Vivarini polyptychs. If the lunette did include the extra figures, it must have originally formed a wide segmental shape.

Taking into account its original composition of three vertical panels and wide lunette, it is possible the *St Roch Altarpiece* was articulated in what Humfrey terms the 'Paduan format', comprising three vertical panels of a similar height topped by a segment-shaped lunette stretching the width of the vertical panels. Of course, this format had been employed in the well-known *Carità* polyptychs of 1460-64 (fig. 6.03; Jacopo Bellini with Giovanni Bellini and assistants, Accademia, Venice), the first renaissance-style altarpieces in Venice.⁶ These may well have been indicated to Bartolomeo as a

⁵ 'il Santo [Rocco] sulle nubi con la Vergine col Bambino, incoronata dagli angeli'. Basaldella (2000), p. 102. Basaldella does not cite any source for this assertion and his interpretation of the lunette may be due to his reading of nineteenth-century writers' descriptions of a later work which had then been set above the St Roch panel and depicted the *Virgin in Glory*. See for example, E. Paoletti (1837), I, pp. 167-68.

⁶ On the development of the 'Paduan format' altarpiece, see Humfrey (1993), pp. 174 ff, particularly p. 180.

formal model for the *St Roch Altarpiece*, although the lunette of the *St Roch Altarpiece* seems exceptionally deep, and the altarpiece may have had a less satisfactory, top-heavy appearance.

The lost frame of the *St Roch Altarpiece* could well have been made by Jacopo da Faenza, given that he collaborated with Bartolomeo on several altarpieces in this period (as discussed in the previous chapter), and Jacopo's consummate handling of classicising motifs was highly suited to this altarpiece type. For the Paduan format called for a classicising frame, perhaps with flat pilasters decorated in foliate relief dividing the vertical panels, and similarly decorated entablature. Observations made in the previous chapter regarding predelle also apply here; it is unlikely the *St Roch Altarpiece* included an historiated predella, notwithstanding this was a feature of the Paduan prototype, but rather, like the *Carità* polyptychs, the predella would have comprised decorative carving.

The frame of the *St Roch Altarpiece* was replaced during the seventeenth century with a baroque, marble cornice, as occurred with the 1475 *Misericordia Triptych*. An inscription records the replacement of the *scuola's* altar: IN TEMPO DI M ANT PAIN GWARDIAN DELLA SCOLA S. ROCCO E COMPAGNI / MDCXXI.⁷ In the new arrangement, the side panels of Saints Sebastian and Louis were installed in niches flanking the altar, and the central panel and lunette were set above the altar, the latter now presumably cut-down so as to conform to the new housing. In 1648 Ridolfi noted: 'The third [panel by Bartolomeo Vivarini is] in S. Eufemia on the Giudecca, in which he depicted St Roch on a gold background, and in two niches to the sides [appear] St Sebastian and St Louis', Martinioni also recorded this arrangement.⁸ Zanetti (cited above) was the last to record the side panels *in situ* in the later eighteenth century, but these had been substituted by different paintings by 1815.⁹

⁷ See Basaldella (2000), p. 36. The inscription occupies the left side of the altar, and its corresponding date appears on the right. Cicogna recorded this inscription, though noted the date 'M.D.C.XXXI', as reproduced in Basaldella (2000), p. 133.

⁸ 'La terza [tavola] in santa Eufemia della Giudecca, nella quale ritrasse san Rocco in campo d'oro, ed in due nicchie dale parti san Sebastiano e san Lodovico'. Ridolfi (1999), p. 54. Martinioni's 1663 addition to Sansovino (1998), p. 251, echoed Ridolfi's description: 'Di antico si conserva una Tavola di mano di Bartolomeo Vivarini con San Rocco nel mezzo in campo d'oro, e li Santi Sebastiano, e Ludovico in due nicche dalle parti'.

⁹ Zanetti (1972), p. 26. G. Moschini (1815), II, p. 352, noted: 'Laterali al primo altare vi sono le figure de'santi Francesco di Paola e Filippo Neri. Sotto ad una di esse v'ha la epigrafe: M.Z.F. (Marco Zanchi).

It seems likely the lost panels of Saints Sebastian and Louis of Toulouse were disposed of in the upheavals of the early nineteenth century. The early guidebooks do not describe these, aside from confirming the gold background of the central panel continued across the side panels ('...in campi d'oro...'), as one would expect. The likely appearance of the saints is discussed below.

The Cult of Saint Roch in Venice and the *Scuola* at S. Eufemia

Although no *mariegola* or contemporary documentation survives for the establishment of the *scuola piccola*, its *juspatronatus* of the altar at S. Eufemia is assured by the above-noted 1621 inscription. Something of the scope and activities of the *scuola* may be recovered through review of the establishment and growth of the cult of San Rocco more generally in Venice, and examination of sources relating to other similarly-dedicated local confraternities.

It is likely the confraternity at S. Eufemia was established in response to the terrible plague of 1478-79, known as the "Plague of Venice", and was therefore approximately coeval with the foundation of the confraternity at San Zulian, the Scuola Disciplinaria di Messer San Rocco, later the famous Scuola Grande di San Rocco.¹⁰ The 1480 date on the altarpiece by Bartolomeo provides a *terminus ante quem* for the establishment of the *scuola* at S. Eufemia, whilst a *terminus post quem* is found in the 1478 *proemio* of the *mariegola maior* of the future Scuola Grande which suggests the latter was the first formal manifestation of the cult in the local area:

...More through divine than human intervention, this our laudable and devout confraternity of the most holy confessor St Roch has been established. [After which], in such a short time [the cult]

Nell'altare vi è assai bella tavola in campo d'oro con la figura di s. Rocco e prospettiva, e di sopra N.D. in gloria. Sotto la figura del santo si legge: *Bartolomeus Vivarinus pinxit 1480.*' E. Paoletti (1837), pp. 167-68, also saw these some twenty years later: 'Del Zanchi sono le figure laterali al primo altare con s. Rocco, e la Vergine in gloria. L'altare ha una bella tavola da Bartolommeo Vivarini fatta nel 1480, opera che si per la correzione, e si per la semplicità propria di quelle epoche merita la considerazione dell'intelligente.'

¹⁰ Maggioni (2000), p. 60.

has penetrated the hearts [*lit.* viscera] and minds of each person, in every part of the city. Before, there was no memory at all of this glorious Saint, thus the *scuola* was established....¹¹

This passage also confirms reports of a Venetian confraternity dedicated to Roch dating from the early decades of the fifteenth-century are almost certainly spurious (these claims instead attest the felt need to manufacture venerability for the fledgling cult.)¹² The foundation of the Venetian *scuole* dedicated to Roch was therefore coeval with the explosion of the cult more generally in northern Italy, the region where it apparently began. Despite Roch's supposed fourteenth-century origins, the earliest secure manifestations of the cult date from the 1460s and '70s, and include the adoption of Roch as an additional patron by the Paduan confraternity of St Lucy in 1467, the erection of a church dedicated to St Roch in Brescia in 1469, and the 'discovery' of Roch's body at Voghera near Piacenza in the same year.¹³

Characterised by its rehearsal of hagiographical *topoi* and with no basis in historical fact, a manuscript known as the *Acta Brevoria* is widely regarded as the earliest biography of St Roch; it cannot be dated much before 1478 with any certainty (published 1483).¹⁴ The *Acta* was the textual source of the first published account of Roch's life by Francesco Diedo, Venetian governor of Brescia, whose *Vita Sancti Rochi*

¹¹ 'El sia sta principiata piu divina che humanamente questa nostra laudabile e devota fraternita e schuola del beatissimo confessore misser san Rocho. Quando in si breve tempo la e penetrata tanto nelintelieto e viscere de chadauno che si come in alcun luogo quasi dela cita. Prima non era memoria alguna de tal glorioxo Sancto cusi statim principiata la schuola...' Scuola Grande di San Rocco, *Proemio...*, cited in full in Tonon (1998), pp. 34-37.

¹² Some authors have stated the cult arrived in Venice some sixty years earlier in 1415, but according to Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 233, cat. a 6, there is no real evidence for these assertions.

¹³ On the earliest manifestations of the cult and its expansion, see Marshall (1994), p. 504, including n. 45 and p. 505, n. 56 and Maggioni (2000), p. 60; for the Brescian foundation and the discovery and *translatio* of Roch's body, Palmer (1978), p. 305 and pp. 286-87. The assertions of Schmitz-Eichhoff (1977), p. 58 and pp. 119-24 and subsequently Marshall (*loc. cit.*), that Vivarini altarpieces of 1464 and 1465 include St Roch, and may be counted among the earliest manifestations, can probably be discounted – the relevant saint (lower order, far right) in Antonio's *Pesaro Polyptych* may be identified as St Vitus, Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat. 6, and the pilgrim figure in the 1465 *Naples Altarpiece* is better identified as Alexis, *ibid.*, p. 342, cat. 8. Although most scholars believe the cult spread to northern Europe from Venice after 1485, Bolle and Jansen-Sieben (1982), p. 82, argue it was already present in the low countries from the first half of the fifteenth-century, citing texts which they argue were independent of the *Acta Brevoria*, which is more generally taken as the first manifestation of the cult (see below).

¹⁴ The exact date of the *Acta Brevoria* is unknown. According to Marshall, attempts to date it to c. 1430 are unconvincing, and that the only secure *terminus ante quem* is the *Vita de S. Rocho* by F. Diedo, begun 1478, which undoubtedly relied on the *Acta*.

ran to several Latin and vulgar editions, published from 1479.¹⁵ In his preface Diedo, alludes to the 'crude' documentary sources upon which he relied: '...we have assembled some things together, partly from some barbarous [document] fragments, partly from vulgar poems and roughly written verses ...'.¹⁶

Diedo was moved to promote the cult of Roch by the devastation caused by the 1478 plague, and it was his express intention that: '...the peregrinations, life and death of this most holy man should not remain obscure...'.¹⁷ Describing Roch as a '...most holy man, whom we should all emulate and follow with pious prayer...', Diedo fashioned him as an exemplum to inspire the popular imagination and enjoin people in confraternal activities.¹⁸ In his foreword, he declared the exemplary ways of the saints should be promulgated through lively, imaginative representation:

...we must emulate the doings and lifestyles of very holy men who redeem both body and soul, and who make themselves worthy of the heavenly prize through their excellent writings. [In order to do this]...we must set them before us for our contemplation...and sometimes [we should] follow the example of the painters, who in...instructing their pupils, set their spirits alight with the study of the fine arts, teach them not only with words but sometimes setting before them lively images...¹⁹

¹⁵ F. Diedo *Vita de S. Rocho* (or *Vita Sancti Rochi*), Milan, 1478/79, Simone Magniago. Published versions appeared simultaneously in vulgar and Latin. Later published in Venice and elsewhere, including: Venice 1483-84, Bernardino Benagli, and Milan, c. 1484, Giovanni Antonio da Onate. Some scholars have dated the first edition to earlier in the 1470s, apparently without foundation.

Other published versions of the *Life* include: Domenico da Vicenza *L'istoria di San Rocco* Milan, 1478-80, Leonhard Pachel and Ulrich Scinzenzeler; Paolo Attavanti *Vita....* Brescia, 1481-82, Bartolomeo di Carlo Vercellese, and *idem*. Pavia, c.1495, Cristoforo de'Canì; Ercole Albiflorio *Vita di San Rocco*, c. 1498, Giovanni Battista Sessa. See Maggioni (2000).

¹⁶ 'Habbiamo ricolte alcune cose parte da alcuni fragm[en]ti Barbari. Parte da alcuni ritimi [sic] & versi vulgari scripti rude & grossamente' F. Diedo, 1r. Textual analysis has confirmed these sources were indeed the *Acta Brevoria*, see Marshall (1994), p. 504, n. 47.

¹⁷ '...Nie[n]te di meno azio che la generatio[n]e p[er] genie. La peregrinatione la vita: & morte de questio sanctissimo homo non rimanga in obscuro'. F. Diedo (1479), 1r.

¹⁸ 'Rocho sanctissimo homo. El qual tuti dovemo imitar & quello cum pietose oratione proseguir...' F. Diedo (1479), 20v.

¹⁹ '...nui debiamo imitare i costumi i fati & vita di sanctissimi homini I quali salvano el corpo & la anima insieme & se fano degni cum li sui optimi docume[n]ti del premio divino. Per la qual cosa debiamo preponere questoro davanti nui per vederli contemplarli & mutarli. Et alcune volte seguire el modo dei pictori: I quali vole[n]do erudire I loro discipuli per acce[n]der li amimi [sic] loro al studio de le bone arte li erudisseno non solum cum parole . ma proponendoli alcune volte Imagine vive...'. F. Diedo (1479), 1v.

The conclusion of Diedo's account, in which a young man is moved to save a (mythic) Church council from the plague through the invocation of Roch, is a veiled exhortation to corporate supplications in the saint's name:

...I comfort you excellent Fathers, that all of us [should] make recourse to [Roch] chastising our bodies with whipping and fasting, and pray, and parade under his standard about the city for three days, devoutly praying to him...If he would [restore] the health to this city...²⁰

Diedo's *Vita* must have been a major stimulus to the dramatic expansion of the cult in Venice, but it is doubtful whether it instigated the inception of the cult there. Although Diedo stated Roch was still an 'obscure' figure, the devotion already excited by the uncanonised and historically-suspect saint in Venice is recorded in the *mariegola* of the nascent Scuola Grande, coeval with Diedo's original manuscript (1478):

...in this city there is no corner in which the name of this saint is not invoked by everybody with all their hearts. [He is] honoured and celebrated for so very many countless miracles, that in all the land the eternal God has demonstrated through the intercession of his aforesaid most holy confessor²¹

Within a few years of its foundation, the *scuola* at San Zulian acquired the supposed body of St Roch (1484-85). In an analogous fashion to the appropriation of St Mark's body and cult, Roch was assumed into the Venetian pantheon, and Venice became an important *locus* for the cult and its promulgation.²² It was so successful in attracting members, that just eleven years after its establishment, the *scuola* at San Zulian was able to petition the Council of Ten for the expansion of its membership to five hundred, and *scuola grande* status.²³ It would establish a large *albergo* and church near the Frari, and its vacated altar at San Zulian was taken over in 1496 by a new *scuola piccola*

²⁰ '...io vi conforto padri optimi che tuti se recoramo a lui castiga[n]do il corpo nostro cu[m] discipline e ieiunii e soto il suo stendardo per tre zorni far la oratione p[ro]cessio[n]e per la cita e devotamente pregarlo...Se vogli dignar la salute a questa cita.' F. Diedo (1479), 19v - 20r.

²¹ '...in essa cita el non se ritroui alcun angulo nel qual el nome de esso sancto non sia con tuto el cuore da chadauno invocato: honorato e celebrato per tali tanti e innumerable miracoli che per tuta la terra lo eterno dio ha dimonstrato mediante la intercession del predito suo confessor sanctissimo.' Scuola Grande di San Rocco, *Proemio...*, cited Tonon (1998), pp. 34-37.

²² Pullan (1990), p. 277. However, Bolle (1982), pp. 81-82, argues that the cult was present in the Low Countries before the translation of the Saint's relics to Venice.

²³ Pullan (1990), p. 273-74.

dedicated to Saints Roch and Nicholas. The surviving statutes (also 1496) of the latter confraternity uniquely demonstrate how the legend of Roch was employed as a framework of principles for the organisation of religious devotions and provision of social welfare. Firstly, Roch's deeds and qualities are eulogised in a versified life, based largely on Diedo's text, which is followed by the actual statutes where prescribed duties directly take up from the saint's deeds recounted in the verse, and include almsgiving, care of sick company members, partaking of sacraments, and so forth.

The later 1470s saw other local manifestations of the cult, including: a devotional group based near the Frari, which soon merged with the first San Zulian confraternity; an altar at the church of San Vidal for which Bartolomeo painted another triptych with St Roch in the centre (see below), of which the donor remains obscure; the establishment of the Mestre branch of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in 1487;²⁴ and a newly-constructed convent dedicated to Saints Margaret and Roch, from 1488.²⁵ Saint Roch would also appear together with other saints on altars where he was not the principal *titulus*, as in the altarpiece by Andrea da Murano painted for the *scuola* of St Peter martyr based at the eponymous church on Murano (fig. 6.14).

The exponential growth of the cult of Roch may be understood in the context of the persistence of the Old Testament *topos* which saw disease and calamity as an act of a remote and omnipotent deity, provoked to vengeance by humanity's sinful behaviour.²⁶ The causal relationship between the offence of God and epidemic is emphasised in, for example, Pino's account of the life of Roch, when the city of Piacenza is punished for ostracising the saint: '[Piacenza] experienced God's vengeance [and]...the city started to burn more fiercely than ever with pestilence...'.²⁷ Religious remedies for the plague were similarly formulated in Old Testament tradition, and aimed at divine appeasement through collective sacrificial and penitential offerings, but took the form of chapels,

²⁴ Humfrey (1993), p. 116.

²⁵ Martinioni in Sansovino (1998), p. 115. Stringa had noted the convent of S. Margarita was transferred from Torcello, to be rebuilt from 1488 near campo S. Stefano. It is not clear if the *titulus* of S. Rocco was added to the dedication at this date.

²⁶ Notwithstanding the popular enthusiasm, the official Church did not unreservedly approve of the 'near idolatrous' cult, as it is described by Humfrey, and would delay the canonisation of Roch until the seventeenth-century. Humfrey, (1988), p. 411 and Boeckl (2001), p. 35 ff; on the tension between popular enthusiasm for the cult and its official acceptability, Lomastro Tognato (1994).

²⁷ '[Piacenza] provò la vendetta di Dio...la città cominciò ad ardere di Peste assai piu che prima'. Pino (1576), 10r.

altars, penitential exercises, processions and prayers to intermediary saints such as Roch, Sebastian and, of course, the Virgin.²⁸ In late renaissance Venice, ostentatious offerings are splendidly manifest in the great churches of the Redentore and Madonna della Salute, the construction phase of the former being associated with the abatement of the great plague of 1576.²⁹

Believed to expiate sin, flagellation banished the moral corruption which resulted in pestilence. Biblical precedence was found in the flagellation of Christ, and the flagellant sought to identify with the suffering of his Redeemer.³⁰ The resolution of Diedo's *Vita* propounds the efficacy of self-flagellation and fasting against epidemic:³¹

Those Fathers all listened to the young man's counsel, and they took the standard with the image of Roch and with great pomp, followed by the local people, they carried it for three days about the land in procession, and making supplication, chastised their bodies with fasts and self-flagellation. It is difficult to explain just how quickly that town was freed from the plague [once] this was done.³²

In fifteenth-century Venice, flagellation was still practiced violently and publicly, and its practice was a distinguishing feature of the *Scuole Grandi*.³³ Yet it appears the devotees of St Roch at San Zulian also practiced flagellation, or *disciplina*, before their *scuola* was conceded *Scuola Grande* status, perhaps because of the special institution and scope of the *scuola* with regard to the 1478 pandemic. Given its eponymous dedication and its coeval institution, it is probable the Scuola di San Rocco on the Giudecca was also flagellant. Indeed, Basaldella refers in passing to the confraternity's 'brothers of the discipline', although the term is un-referenced.³⁴

²⁸ Boeckl (2001), p. 29, and Humfrey (1993), p. 116.

²⁹ Schupbach (1979), p. 315.

³⁰ See, for example, Banker (1990), pp. 145 ff and Pullan (1990), p. 274, on the various interpretations of the act of self-flagellation.

³¹ Pullan (1990), p. 274 and Henderson (1997), p. 114.

³² 'Quelli padri laudorno tuti il consilio dil Zovene & tolto il standardo cu[m] la imagine de Rocho cum gran pompa. Seguitando il populo. portarono per tre zorni circa la terra fazando processione e supplicatione. castigando il corpo cum ieunii & flagelli . Fatto questo difichel cosa a dire come presto quella cita fo liberata da la peste.' F. Diedo (1479), 19v-20r.

³³ Pullan (1990), p. 274 and Sbriziolo (1970), p. 716.

³⁴ See Tonon (1998), pp. 42-45, for the significant distinction between 'confratelli di disciplina' (ordinary flagellant members) and 'confratelli esenti' those who did not practice flagellation, including nobles. Also Pullan (1990), pp. 279-80. Basaldella seldom supplies references to his brief comments on the *Scuola di*

Of course, the success of the cult of St Roch is ultimately owed to the saint's reputation as a thaumaturge. The scope of confraternities dedicated to Roch was, in part, to petition for his intercession for protection and healing, as is evident in the narrative verse of the 1496 *mariegola* of the *scuola* of Saints Roch and Nicholas:

Now we pray to Roch with the desire
That he intercedes with Christ and His pure mother
[And] with his sweet prayers Saint Roch
Protects us from that fiery pestilence³⁵

Likewise the *mariegola* of the *Mestre scuola*, established in 1487, expressly prays its intercessor protect them from disease: '...praying to that protector, object of our devotion, procurator and intercessor with the divine majesty, [through] whom we can be liberated from disease and pestilent airs.'³⁶ The establishment of corporations in response to plague may be explained by the perceived greater efficacy of group supplications over private petitioning of saints.³⁷

Such desperate reliance on thaumaturge saints was surely due to the absence of effective medical remedies for the plague, as illustrated by Paduan physician Michele Savonarola's frank admission of impotence: 'it is clear to us that human hands cannot heal these pestilent maladies, and if someone recovers, he is like a dead man walking...one has to believe that the plague is a case for God alone'.³⁸ Nonetheless, the recourse to saints was not in lieu of other action, but rather numbered among several co-

San Rocco, and the context indicates he mistakenly uses the term 'confratelli di disciplina' as though synonymous with 'confraternity member'. Basaldella (1989), p. 200, n. 9.

³⁵ 'or pregaremo Rocheo com desire / che pregi christo cum la sua madre pura / con li suo dolzi pregi el sancto Rocheo / da pestilentia zi guardi e di quel foco.' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Ir.

³⁶ '...pregando quello volgi esser protector, procurador et intercessor apresso la divina maiesta, che possiamo esser liberati da morbo et pestifero aere'. Sbriziolo (1968), p. 73, also cited Humfrey (1993), p. 116 and p. 327, n. 89.

³⁷ Humfrey (1993), p. 116. Humfrey notes that St Sebastian was represented fairly frequently in private altarpieces.

³⁸ Michele Savonarola (1384-1468): 'vedemo bene che questi mali pestilenziali mane humane non li po guarire, e sel guarisce, è come morto risuscitato; pero se debe crede che la peste è caso a Dio riservato.' Cited Lomastro Tognato (1994), pp. 21-22.

existing spiritual and practical strategies aimed at controlling the persistent threat of disease.³⁹

But spiritual approaches to disease were not limited to the sole objective of physiological recovery. John Henderson argues that the early modern hospital was equally concerned, if not more so, with the well-being of the soul as the health of the body.⁴⁰ Likewise, physiological health was not ostensibly the top priority of *scuole* dedicated to thaumaturge saints – the 1478 *Proemio* of the San Rocco *mariegola maior* emphasises the inevitable fragility and ephemerality of human life, declaring the scope of the *scuola* to be ‘the health of our *souls*’ and ‘eternal health’. Nevertheless, the recurrent metaphors of health and disease in the *Proemio* reveal anxiety in the face of pandemic:

Through experience we know that in truth happiness in this life is so very fragile and transitory. And that everything is created by the Almighty God and was thus created according to His will. Our souls are created in paradise, [but] inhabiting and robed in this flesh remain deprived of the divine.⁴¹

These sentiments are echoed in the 1496 *mariegola* of the *scuola* of Saints Roch and Nicholas:

...we must remain vigilant in holy prayers not forsaking good works, for we do not know the day nor the hour of [our] cruel and frightening death. [We should] regard these considerations with all our minds and make preparations for the good health of our souls. And avoid the miserable things of this world.⁴²

³⁹ Pullan observes: ‘The cult of San Rocco...[was]... a spiritual complement to the long series of highly practical measures against the plagueOver the half century from 1478 to 1528, the pestilence was to recur at intervals of five or six years, and the city had desperate need of the protection afforded by both saints and living persons.’ Pullan (1990), p. 275.

⁴⁰ Henderson (2001).

⁴¹ ‘la salute dele anime nostre’; ‘[la] salute eterna’; ‘Cognoscendo in verita nuj per experiential quanto la felicità de la vita prexente sia falace frazile e transitoria: Et che tute le cose dal onnipotente dio sono create e cusi sono create al suo fine. Essendo lanima nostra creata nel paradixo e damente e vesitata de questa carne: remane privata dela divinità’ *Proemio*..., cited in Tonon (1998), pp. 34-37.

⁴² ‘...debianno star vigilanti nele sancte oratione non declinando dale bone operatione per che non sapiamo el zorno ne etiam la hora dela crudele et spaventosa morte. Sopra le qual cose considerate com tuta la mente disponendose per la salute de la anime. Et per schivar le misere cose de questo mundo. BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, 1v.

It is almost certain that the Scuola di San Rocco at S. Eufemia likewise prepared its members for the desired “good death” and, with the assistance of the clergy at the ‘host’ church, dispensed spiritual therapies such as the sacraments of confession, communion and extreme unction, ensuring for members well-attended funerals and burials, and regular prayer for their souls. In describing Roch’s demise, Diedo’s *Vita* supplied a model for the good death. The text must have particularly appealed to the popular imagination through the presentation of the saint as vulnerable and human: ‘And feeling himself to have arrived at the end he asked the guards to call a priest... Roch threw himself down at the priest’s feet and confessed with many tears and asked for the body of Christ...’.⁴³

It is likely that healthy *confratelli* of the *scuola* at S. Eufemia assisted the sick, as did their counterparts in many Italian lay confraternities dedicated to Roch. The narrative verse of the 1496 *mariegola* of the *scuola* of Saints Roch and Nicholas labours over many exemplary deeds of the saint, exhorting its members to charitable works following the saint’s example: ‘...he visited the sick / By night and by day, banishing their cares / In the love of God...’.⁴⁴ The actual statutes include the explicit instruction: ‘How one must visit the Sick’; in this case, assistance was extended to members of the *scuola* only, ‘the sick’ being defined as ‘any brother or sister of ours’.⁴⁵ The future Scuola Grande di San Rocco had sufficient financial resources to fund nursing care, ‘four good women’, probably not members, were waged and boarded at the expense of the *scuola* ‘to visit our sick brothers... Those who attend the aforesaid sick (who have no-one [else] to attend them), are obliged to serve them and attend to them with every care and every diligence’.⁴⁶

⁴³ ‘Et sente[n]dossi pervenuto al extre[m]o prego gli custodi facesse vegnir un sacerdote Zo[n]to li ...Rocho se zito ai piedi del sacerdote confessato cu[m] molti lachrimi gli doma[n]do il corpo de Christo....’ F. Diedo (1479), 16r-17v.

⁴⁴ ‘...li infermi visitava / de nocte e de di li traeva daffanni / in el amore de dio...’. BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Dr.

⁴⁵ ‘Como se die visitar li Infermi’; ‘alcuno nostro fradello o vero sorella’ BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, 3r. On *Scuole* provision of welfare exclusively or mainly to the brotherhood, see Pullan (1971), p. 84.

⁴⁶ ‘quatro bone done’ ‘vixitar li infermi nostri fradeli ...e quelli se le ristrovasse algun de li diti infermi non aver persona che li atendi siano tegnude de servili e attenderli con ogni cura e ogni diligentia’. Cited Tonon (1998), p. 76.

As with other categories of Venetian sodality, *scolae communes*, such as the Scuola di San Rocco at S. Eufemia, were subject to government supervision. It is notable that the authorities exceptionally permitted the near-simultaneous establishment of up to three Venetian *scuole* dedicated to Roch, when *scuole* were not normally permitted to share the same titular; it seems exceptions were made for very popular cults and, in any case, a plurality of altars dedicated to Roch was probably believed conducive to the general good, affording increased public protection from disease.⁴⁷ It was also practical for a second *scuola* dedicated to Roch to be established on the Giudecca, given the island's separation from central Venice by a wide, un-bridged waterway. Through the foundation of the *scuola*, Giudecca residents would have enjoyed ready access to an altar dedicated to the thaumaturge, and enhanced local provision for the sick and dying.

Like other confraternities associated with the plague, it appears the *scuola* at S. Eufemia was relatively affluent, indicated by the assets it accumulated over the centuries. It would have benefited from numerous bequests, as epidemics generally prompted donations to organisations associated with plague relief, and increased mortality converted testamentary promises rapidly into capital.⁴⁸ Shortly after its inception the Scuola di San Rocco could already afford the impressive altarpiece by Bartolomeo, now at the height of his success; some years later it raised a relief lunette over the main portal of the host church, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints Roch and Eufemia* (early-sixteenth century?, *in situ*);⁴⁹ it renewed the altar in 1621, as noted above; acquired a number of precious liturgical objects; a wellhead was decorated with its emblem; a couple of houses on the Giudecca, perhaps employed as dwellings for impecunious *confratelli*, also displayed the image of St Roch.⁵⁰

As discussed in the previous chapter, a confraternity's church altarpiece was central to its devotional life, the focus of the group devotions comprising funerals, the commemoration and prayers for the souls of their dead and regular masses including, of course, the celebration of the Eucharist. The sacrament of Holy Communion must have been particularly significant for the members of a confraternity dedicated to a plague

⁴⁷ See Sbriziolo (1968), pp. 410-11, on this rule and examples of exceptions.

⁴⁸ Henderson (1997), pp. 178 ff, a similar point is made by Humfrey (1993), p. 116

⁴⁹ Basaldella, (2000), p. 63.

⁵⁰ Basaldella (1989), p. 200, n. 9 and *idem.*, (2000), p. 79.

saint, for reception of the Eucharistic species was deemed to promote bodily health and protection from sudden death.⁵¹ Like other *scuole*, that of Saints Roch and Nicholas at San Zulian obliged members to partake of that sacrament at least once a year:

We will and order that each of our brothers and sisters be obliged to confess twice per annum, or at least once: that is on the feast of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and [on] that of the Resurrection at Easter, so as to receive the most holy body of Christ in the proper way...⁵²

For confraternities without a dedicated meeting room, the chapel altar might also function as the focus of any extra-liturgical ceremonies, such as the initiation of new members. This was the case at San Zulian:

And those who will be received [as members] must humbly kneel before the altar of Mister Saint Roch. And the *gastaldo* must kiss them on the mouth as a sign of love and peace.⁵³

In perilous times, *scuola* altarpieces depicting protector saints must have acquired a special importance. The *St Roch Altarpiece* at S. Eufemia could have provided some sense of personal protection and reassurance to a member of the confraternity, for the sight of an image of the protector saint was considered prophylactic. Popular custom held that it was sufficient to look upon an image of St Christopher in order to safeguard oneself on that day from sudden death, a tradition explicitly invoked in an inscription on a large late fourteenth-century depiction of the saint on a pier at San Nicolò in Treviso.⁵⁴ The miraculous potential of St Roch's image was insinuated by Diedo where he recounts that a standard bearing an image of St Roch was paraded to alleviate the plague outbreak at the Council of Costanza.⁵⁵ Diedo's was probably the first *Life* to describe this episode, although the *topos* is familiar, deriving from images of the

⁵¹ Zika (1988), p. 31 and p. 64.

⁵² 'Item volemo [et] ordenemo che zaschaduno nostro fradello [et] sorella siano tegnuti de confessarse due volte a la[n]no o almancho una volta: zoe inla festa dela nativita del nostro sig[n]or mis[er] Iesu [christ]o: et da pasqua de la resurrectio[n]e: et recever lo s[an]ctissimo corpo de [christ]o possendo a bono modo. E quelli ch' non obs[er]vase questo ordene che lo gastaldo [et] li ufficiali debia reprinter quei o quelle tre fiade: [et] quelli o q[ue]lle che non se volese mendar siano cazadi dela scola senza altra inquisition.' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, 4r.

⁵³ 'Et quelli tali che serano receuti se debia humelmente inzenochiarse avanti lo altar de miser Sancto Rocheo. E lo gastaldo sia tegnudo di basar quei per bocha insegno de caritade et paxe.' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, 4r.

⁵⁴ Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 212.

⁵⁵ Cited above.

Madonna associated with the cessation of plague.⁵⁶ Pino's 1516 version of the Saint's life relates the same miracle, as well as affirming countless miracles were owed to the saint's relics in Venice. Pino also included a further episode to suggest the thaumaturgical power which could be mustered by even a makeshift altar bearing the saint's image:

In recent times in Paris, a great plague descended amongst the friars of St Mary of the Carmelites, which frightened the good fathers who did not know what to do. So their principal placed outside the image of St Roch and there consecrated an altar to him, and ordered that every Sunday he be celebrated there until such time as the sickness passed. After this [was done] no one there was heard to have died of plague.⁵⁷

The supposed miraculous efficacy of images of Roch, together with the ongoing plague emergency, must have urged the new confraternities at S. Eufemia and San Zulian to decorate their respective altars without delay, for it seems they made it a priority to commission altarpieces featuring Roch very shortly after their institution in or around 1478.

The Iconography of the *St Roch Altarpiece*

Turning now to examine the iconography of the *St Roch Altarpiece*, particular attention is paid to the visual and textual sources of the work, as well as the way its visual content served the assumed character and objectives of the *scuola* at S. Eufemia.

In the panel depicting Roch and the angel, the artist equivocated between narrative and iconic idioms to create an image inviting veneration, but which also relates a particular incident in the legend – the miraculous healing of the saint from the plague. Attired as a pilgrim and clasping a sturdy staff which almost bisects the image, Roch is shown standing on stony ground in a rural landscape. A winding, tree-lined road, indicative of the difficult roads along which he made his pious journey, has brought him from the turreted gate of a distant walled city, a fantastical allusion to Piacenza where the saint

⁵⁶ Vauchez (2000), p. 13.

⁵⁷ 'A nostri tempi in Parigi era entrata una gran peste ne' Frati di S Maria de' Carmelitani. diche impauriti que' buoni Padri, non sapevano che si fare, quando un d'essi principal tra loro , pose fuori l'immagine di S Rocco: & consacratogli un'altare, ordino che ogni Domenico gli si celebrasse perche piu oltre non passo quel male, ne dapoi si sa, che vi sia morto alcuno di pestilenza.' Pino (1576), 12v.

sojourned and healed the sick, but where he was ostracised by the ungrateful citizens after contracting the plague himself.⁵⁸ He displays a bubo on his thigh, a festering sore running with blood and an angel blesses him, making the sign of the cross above the wound.

As the first major representation of St Roch in Venice, the carved figure which occupied the centre of the mixed-media altarpiece at San Zulian (1478/79), made for the future Scuola Grande di San Rocco, must have informed Bartolomeo's several representations of the saint, although the unfortunate loss of the sculpture prevents confirmation of this.⁵⁹ But Bartolomeo's version was evidently also informed by a textual source – Diedo's newly-published *Vita*. The saint's attire and accessories (short red jerkin, hat, cloak, boots, staff and purse) as they appear in the altarpiece follow Diedo's description: '[Rocco] decided to go to Italy. [He] dressed in a short scarlet tunic, putting over it a cape, and took his hat, money bag and pilgrim's staff and a pair of shoes or, rather, short boots'.⁶⁰ Bartolomeo elaborated on Diedo's economic portrayal, emphasising Roch's piety and vocation as a pilgrim by adding further pious accessories: the shell on his mantle, the Veronica on his hat, and rosary attached to his belt – the latter detail emphasises his prayerfulness, and also refers to the Virgin depicted in the lunette above.

In some accounts of the life of Roch, his miraculous recovery from the plague occurs in the forest, or in the shack while he sleeps, whereas in Diedo's version the saint was returning from Piacenza: '...Roch [was] outside the city, and a voice was heard from the Heavens saying "Roch, Roch your prayers have been answered and we will give you health"...'.⁶¹ Bartolomeo accordingly indicated Roch's recent departure from the city by showing him with his back turned upon it, and as if to emphasise Roch's ostracisation, Piacenza is shown with impregnable fortifications. Whereas Diedo

⁵⁸ 'difficulta de strade & vie' F. Diedo (1479), 11r.

⁵⁹ Humfrey (1988), pp. 410-11; Wiel (2000), p. 67 and p. 78, n. 9. See also below on the S. Zulian altarpiece.

⁶⁰ 'Delibero andare in italia. vestito de uno gonelino Curto di scarlato ponendo sopra quello un mantelino: tolto il capello la scarsella e il bordone & uno paro (*sic*) de scarpe over bolzachini.' Diedo (1479), 7r. According to Vauchez (2000), p. 19, Roch's traditional guise of red jerkin and cape of rough cloth derives from this account.

⁶¹ '...rocho fuor di la cita: e fo audita u[n]a voca dal cielo. dice[n]do rocho rocho la oration tua e sta exaudita nui te donaremo la sanita.' F. Diedo (1479), 15r.

recounted the event of the miracle through the voice of God, to render the miracle visually Bartolomeo added an angel as messenger of God. That this is the moment of healing is connoted by the angel's benediction with the sign of the cross, a reference which echoes the *leitmotif* of textual versions of the legend, for Roch was born with the sign of the cross etched on his skin, and it was through the invocation of the sign of the cross that he miraculously healed the sick. Diedo recounts: 'Thus he gently cured those suffering from the plague with the sign of the cross', and '...consoling those sick people with his sweet face and soft words, touching them and making the sign of the cross, he healed them...'.⁶² The 1496 San Zulian *mariegola* likewise alludes to Roch's healing ministrations effected through the sign of the cross and – lest anyone attribute magical powers to the Saint – due to divine grace:

Then he made the sign of the cross
 Kissed them and touched them with his hand
 By the grace of the high, worthy Lord
 Each of them became well⁶³

Another passage in the same text likens Roch to an angel:

He touched all [the sick] on the hand
 And blessed them all
 Each of them became well
 And every sick person comforted himself
 Saying [it is] an angel, not a mortal
 Who came here in this place
 To diminish the pain of the great fire⁶⁴

This period saw beautiful, optimistic plague-related images supplant the more

⁶² 'Cussi dolcemente sano tutti quelli Infermi che erano li apestadi cum el segno di la croce.'; 'Co[n]sola[n]do quelli i[n]fermi cu[m] dolce faza & amenissime parole: Tocha[n]doli e signati di croce li resano...'. F. Diedo (1479), 11r and 15r.

⁶³ 'Alora faceva de la croce el segno. / basavali e tochavali con mano. / per la virtu de lalto signor degno / zashun de loro diventava sano.' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Fv.

⁶⁴ '...a tuti quanti [malati] lui tocho la mano / E la benediction a tuti dava / Ognun de quelli diventava sano / E ogni infermo si se confortava / Dicendo uno anzolo che non e christiano / Qual evenuto qui in questo loco / Aze amorzata la pena al gran focho' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Cr.

lugubrious traditional plague genres, such as the triumph of death, and indeed figures such as the St Sebastian of the *St Vincent Ferrer Polyptych* (fig. 6.08) could be articulated in this idealised plague vocabulary, as a 'Christian Apollo'.⁶⁵ But the figure of Roch fused both traditions, as the saint is usually depicted as a handsome youth with an improbably healthy complexion, yet contaminated by one deadly, ugly sore. This visual dichotomy befits fifteenth-century constructions of sanctity, where the saintly body was the site of sometimes conflicting manifestations of sainthood, such as signs of bodily privation, wounds (which could signify martyrdom as a qualification of sanctity) or a preternatural glow.⁶⁶ Diedo described such a glow emanating from Roch's face at the moment of his death:

'... the priest descended to the bottom of the [prison] tower in which place it was impossible for natural light to penetrate, but he saw there a marvellous light, which made him wonder and, looking into the face of Roch, there appeared to emanate a divine light from his eyes...'.⁶⁷

Bartolomeo indeed shows the saint with luminous face and large burnished halo which melds into the gold ground.

According to Pullan it was the wound which particularly heightened Roch's popular appeal:

San Rocco, who had himself suffered, had a special power because of his humanity; indeed, he was usually portrayed as having the boil on his thigh, as a symbol of the corruption and vulnerability of the flesh, less elegant but more poignant than the older protector against pestilence, St Sebastian pierced with arrows.⁶⁸

If Roch's wound indicated his humanity, this was consonant with the traditional reading of Christ's wounds, and specifically the miracle of the Incarnation. It is therefore significant that the dichotomous perfection and vulnerability of human flesh with which

⁶⁵ Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 212, also Boeckl (2001), pp. 31-35.

⁶⁶ See Campbell (1997), chapter 3, particularly p. 77.

⁶⁷ '...el sacerdote discese nel fo[n]do di la torre nel q[ua]l logo no[n] era possibile i[n]trar lume alcu[n] vede i[n] quello un mirabel spien[n]ore (*sic*) de che molto se maraveglia e risguardando [17v] nela faza a Rocho parselli da gli ochii venir un spie[n]dor divino...' F. Diedo (1479), 17r.

⁶⁸ Pullan (1990), p. 278.

Bartolomeo described Roch may otherwise be found in his oeuvre only in depictions of the Man of Sorrows, such as that of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 5.15). Roch's wound, gushing with blood which stains the dusty ground (fig. 6.05), indeed recalls the gaping bloody wound in Christ's side in the Man of Sorrows. The bubo may even bear Eucharistic significance given that Roch is presented by his hagiographers as an *alter Christus*, and martyrs' blood was traditionally identified with Christ's and, therefore, the Eucharist.⁶⁹ In Diedo's *Vita*, Roch commends the suffering of martyrs as glorious imitation of Christ's Passion: '... not only did both apostles Peter and Andrew wish to be crucified, they both believed that sort of pain to be glorious...and wanted...such a bitter death in order to imitate Christ their teacher...'.⁷⁰ If Roch was not a martyr *per se*, Diedo characterises Roch's sickness as participation in Christ's suffering, and his disease is framed as another type of martyrdom.⁷¹ Before he is stricken, Roch was forewarned by God: 'My Roch, for love of me you have suffered difficult roads and byways, heat, cold, hunger and exhaustion. But it is yet necessary that you suffer further torments and afflictions of the body'. At the onset of sickness, Roch prays: 'most sweet and clement Jesus, you have considered me your servant. Now you have deigned to allow me to participate in your sufferings', and elsewhere he describes the sick as 'we imitators of Christ'.⁷² It is implicit that the diseased were burdened with the sin of humanity, as was Christ in his Passion (an analogy rendered visually in the medieval Germanic tradition of the *Pestkreuz* where Christ's crucified body was shown blemished with disease, and realised most eloquently in the *Crucifixion* of Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*).⁷³

Bartolomeo also described Roch's Christ-like qualities by depicting him with similar features to Christ: like the coeval *Redeemer Enthroned* (Museo Civico, Bassano), Roch is shown with long wavy hair, full lips, slight bifurcated beard, wide-set eyes, arched

⁶⁹ Meilman (2000), p. 46.

⁷⁰ 'Andrea e piero apostoli volseno non solu[m] esser messi i[n] croce. Ma etia[m] existimo quella generatio[n] de pena esserli gloriosa e volseno partir ta[n]to acerba morte per imitar. Christo suo p[re]ceptore. Francisco etia[m] pocho avanti la eta nostra homo sa[n]ctissimo i[n] segno de gloria & victoria no[n] dubito ricever le stigmati'. F. Diedo (1479), 10r.

⁷¹ This martyrological interpretation of Roch's suffering was quite usual in the period. Marshall (1994), p. 505.

⁷² 'Rocho mio el qual per mio amore hai patito difficulta de strade & vie caldo freddo fame e gran fatiche Necessario anchora e che tu patisse dolori: torm[en]ti: e cruciati del corpo'; '...dulcissimo & cleme[n]tissimo iesu me habi existimato esser tuo servo. hora che me habi degno partecipe de itorme[n]ti tuo'; 'nui imitadori de christo' F. Diedo (1479), 11r and 8r.

⁷³ See Hayum (1989), pp. 36-39.

brows, long fine nose, chiselled face and high cheekbones (figs. 6.04 and 6.06). The artist drew attention to Roch's resemblance to Christ by the similarity of his physiognomy to the *volto santo* of the Veronica pinned on his hat. This portrayal of Roch as an *alter Christus* was again probably suggested by Diedo's *Vita*, where Roch's virtues and biography are obviously Christological (a common feature of the hagiographies).⁷⁴ From birth, Roch was destined to become an imitator and servant of Christ, for 'on the upper left side of his breast...his flesh was marked with a red cross'.⁷⁵ And Roch eulogises the stigmata of that most famous *alter Christus*: 'Francis, [who hailed] from an age not distant from our own, was a most holy man who did not demur from receiving the stigmata as a sign of glory and victory...';⁷⁶ and he advises Gothard, his disciple: 'my son, follow Christ and the apostles... He was not ashamed ...to beg his living from men, and those who followed him left everything behind and all to them seemed glorious living in God's hope and begging in order to imitate the action of Christ, their teacher'.⁷⁷

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The Virgin and Child in the lunette of the *St Roch Altarpiece* are depicted most tenderly. The infant balances on a ledge with his right foot, and his mother cups the other in her left hand. The lunette continues the reassuring theme of the curative blessing of the main panel, although here the benediction is directed towards the viewer. The gesture is apposite in an altarpiece before which confraternity members would have supplicated the Virgin and St Roch for the preservation or renewal of their own health and that of their loved ones, or for strength in adversity or bereavement.

The Virgin and Child was a particularly appropriate subject in the context of an altar dedicated to Roch, rather than a representation of the Trinity, God the Father or the

⁷⁴ For example, in the earlier manuscript published by Bolle, Roch's mother learns of her pregnancy from an angel in an episode which emulates the Annunciation. Bolle, p. 86.

⁷⁵ 'Sopra il petto sinistro dil qual nela carne era signata di una croce rossa'. F. Diedo (1479), 5r.

⁷⁶ 'Francisco... pocho avanti la eta nostra homo sa[n]ctissimo i[n] segno de gloria & victoria no[n] dubito ricever le stimate'. F. Diedo (1479), 10r.

⁷⁷ 'Alhora Rocho rispose fiol mio siegui christo eliapostoli el q[ua]le ave[n]ga fosse filiol de dio : cu[m] verbo unico dil q[ua]le creo tuto de nie[n]te: no[n] se vergogno tame[n] dio & homo mendicar el vive[r] da gli homini : e quelli che seguitava lui abandonado el tuto gli parse cosa gloriosa viver sopra la spera[n]za de dio e me[n]dicar per imitar le action de christo lor p[re]ceptore'. F. Diedo (1479), 14r.

Man of Sorrows, other subjects which could appear in *cimasi* and lunettes of Vivarini altarpieces. As is well known, the Virgin was believed to mediate between humanity and the Old-Testament style God intent on punishing the sinful world with pestilence, and was traditionally invoked against the plague. The *Golden Legend* claims that as early as the sixth-century Pope Gregory I carried an icon of the Virgin, reputedly by St Luke, in a procession through Rome to appeal for the Virgin's intervention during a plague outbreak. From the mid-fourteenth century, another purported St Luke portrait of the Virgin, the miraculous *Madonna of Impruneta* (late thirteenth / early fourteenth century, S. Maria, Impruneta) was paraded around Florence to invoke the Virgin's intervention in the event of plague and other adversities.⁷⁸ (Of course, these represent just a couple of many examples.)

Further, as Maggioni has observed, the earliest manifestations of the novel cult of Roch were buttressed by the venerable and indisputable cult of the Virgin.⁷⁹ Textual sources demonstrate this close association; for example, the *proemio* of the 1478 *mariegola maior* of the future Scuola Grande petitions the Virgin 'advocate of sinners' to intercede for freedom of the body politic from pestilent corruption. An hierarchical chain of intercession from Roch, through the Virgin, to Christ is carefully distinguished:⁸⁰

...by the assiduous prayers and merits of the aforesaid Saint [Roch], may the most glorious Virgin Mary deign to pray her most beloved son our Lord Jesus Christ, preserve us and free us and all this bounteous city and this most excellent State from the pestilence of pagans, enemies and traitors and to keep [its people] forever in peace and happiness, with healthy souls...⁸¹

The narrative verse of the 1496 *mariegola* of the new *scuola* at San Zulian commences with an appeal for inspiration to the 'Glorious Virgin High Queen / Mother of Saviour

⁷⁸ On the *Golden Legend* see Boeckl (2001), note 10, p. 39 and Voragine (1993) I, pp. 173-74. On the *Madonna of Impruneta*, see Norman (1995), p. 180.

⁷⁹ For the deployment of the Virgin to sustain and validate the cult of Roch, Maggioni (2000), p. 61.

⁸⁰ 'advocata di peccatori'.

⁸¹ '...per li assidui priegi e meriti del prefatto sancto [Rocheo] la gloriosissima verzene maria se degni pregar el suo diletissimo fioliolo signor nostro miser Jesu christo che conservi e liberi nui e tuta questa alma cita: e questo Excellentissimo stato de pestilential da pagani e da inimici e traditori: e quello perpetualmente conservi pacifico: e in felicità con salute dele anime.' *Proemio...*, cited by Tonon (1998), pp. 34-37.

Jesus Christ',⁸² and the statutes with an invocation to the Trinity, the Virgin and the titular saints of the confraternity: 'In the name of the Almighty God, Father, son and holy spirit. And of the glorious Virgin Madonna Saint Mary. And of Mister Saint Roch and Saint Nicholas'.⁸³ In Diedo's *Vita*, Roch is effectively commended to the Virgin from before conception, when his barren parents supplicated her for a child. And on false imprisonment, Roch turned to the Virgin for comfort and strength:

...having entered the dark, foetid prison ...[infested] with scorpions, [Roch] knelt on the ground and prayed the Virgin would not forsake him, but for the honour of her son, lend him enough strength of character to withstand every discomfort.⁸⁴

It is notable that in designing the lunette with the Virgin and Child, Bartolomeo or his commissioners selected the iconography which communicated the Virgin's blessing to an individual supplicant. This iconography operated at an emotive and intimate level, rather than that of the Virgin of Mercy, which was a more explicit means of illustrating the Virgin's role of intercessor and protector to a popular audience, her copious mantle shielding her supplicants, sometimes deflecting plague arrows flung from heaven.⁸⁵ The *misericordia* iconography was instead employed by Andrea da Murano in the lunette of his *St Roch Triptych* (1485?, Accademia, Venice), an altarpiece informed in a number of respects by Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece*.⁸⁶

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We can only speculate on the appearance of the lost St Sebastian, as there is no descriptive record of the panel. This loss is particularly unfortunate, because it is likely that Bartolomeo changed his iconographic vocabulary here in response to Antonello's

⁸² 'Verzene gloriosa alta regina / madre de iesu christo salvatore' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Ar.

⁸³ 'Al nome de lo omnipotente idio Padre fiolo et spirito sancto. E de la gloriosa verzene madona sancta Maria. E de misier sancto Rocheo et sancto Nicolo.' BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, 1r.

⁸⁴ '[n]trado adunche nela p[re]son tenebrosa & piena di foetore & farosse co[m]pagno di scorpioni posti gli zenochii in terra fece or[at]ione ala Verzene che non lo aba[n]donasse ma gli p[re]stasse ta[n]ta virtu chel potesse ad honor del filioli suo sustegnir ogni i[n] comodo.' F. Diedo (1479), 17r.

⁸⁵ On the various iconographies of the Virgin expressly associated with plague, see Boeckl (2001), pp. 33-34.

⁸⁶ Scholars have sometimes dated this work to the later 1470s. However, Nepi Sciré and Valcanover (1985), p. 80, propose a date of 1485, the year in which rebuilding recommenced on the church following a fire in 1472 or 1474. If the 1485 date is correct, this would have been the artist's last Venetian work before he settled in Castelfranco.

recent *St Sebastian* (fig. 6.09; 1478/79, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), which formed part of the mixed media altar of the future Scuola Grande di San Rocco at San Zulian.⁸⁷ It is notable that the early sources do not equivocate on the identity of Sebastian in Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece*, whereas, as discussed in the previous chapter, as late as 1477 he had depicted St Sebastian as an elegantly attired youth clasping an arrow after Antonio Vivarini's archaic model. Yet by 1482, when Bartolomeo represented Sebastian in a roundel of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* predella, he had updated the iconography to show the saint naked and pierced by arrows (see chapter 7). It seems likely that he made this change with the *St Roch Altarpiece*, which post-dated Antonello's *St Sebastian* by a year or so – and Bartolomeo certainly knew that work, for the church of San Zulian was a few minutes from his own parish. The plague context of his *St Roch Altarpiece* is also likely to have prompted him to adopt the 'classical' St Sebastian type, for Sebastian pierced by arrows was an eloquent metaphor of disease.⁸⁸ In 1486 Bartolomeo certainly used Antonello's St Sebastian as a model for the same saint in the design of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* (fig. 6.07; Ambrosiana, Milan).⁸⁹

Indeed, the St Sebastian panel of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* may give some indication as to the appearance of the eponymous lost panel of the S. Eufemia altarpiece, as it was probably a poor approximation of it (in the way that the St Roch in the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* was certainly based on the equivalent figure in the S. Eufemia altarpiece). Unfortunately, as all Bartolomeo's surviving full-size panels depicting the 'classical' Sebastian type were made for export, evidently by assistants, each is compromised in both anatomy and physiognomy, making it difficult to imagine how, in the case of the S. Eufemia altarpiece, the artist would have rendered the anatomy competently and infused the figure with pathos, as he did with the Man of Sorrows from the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 5.15). Like Roch, Sebastian was popularly portrayed as an *alter Christus*, and Sebastian's martyrdom was presented as a re-enactment of the Passion. Occasionally artists depicted him with a Christ-like physiognomy and, as

⁸⁷ Antonello's *St Sebastian* must have been painted between March 1478, when the *scuola* at S. Zulian was established, and February 1479, the date of Antonello's death. See Humfrey (1988), p. 411.

⁸⁸ The arrow was the oldest and most commonly used symbol of pestilence. On this symbolism see, for example, Boeckl (2001), p. 31, and Marshall (1994), p. 495.

⁸⁹ The St Sebastian of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych*, which was largely executed by assistants, is described by Humfrey as an 'uncomprehending' derivation of Antonello's; it has even been suggested Bartolomeo's polyptych was based on the whole ensemble at S. Zulian. On the execution and sources of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych*, see Humfrey (1993), p. 201 and p. 332, n. 11.

Marshall has shown, his naked, pierced body was sometimes fashioned to evoke of the Man of Sorrows and bore Eucharistic connotations.⁹⁰ Given the very deliberate Christ-like depiction of Roch in the altarpiece at S. Eufemia, it is likely that Bartolomeo similarly emphasised this typology in the figure of Sebastian.

Of course, St Sebastian was traditionally paired with St Roch on altarpieces, a juxtaposition which has been variously interpreted, with some scholars emphasising the saints' complementary qualities. Roch and Sebastian are certainly complementary visually; whereas St Sebastian's wounds represent the plague metaphorically, St Roch's bubo portrayed the disease literally.⁹¹ Mason-Rinaldi suggests the saints' intercessory roles differed, with Sebastian invoked as a prophylactic and St Roch in the case of actual affliction – although, in practice, any distinction was blurred.⁹² It is also worth noting that popular custom held that recourse to a phalanx of intercessors afforded greater celestial protection and assistance, which probably explains why five out of the six panels of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* comprised saints with plague associations (Saints Christopher, Sebastian, Roch, Bernardine, and the Virgin).⁹³

It is also significant that the Giudecca had recently acquired a special association with St Sebastian. A contemporary manuscript, once proudly displayed at the Benedictine convent of S. Croce on the Giudecca, recounts how the saint visited the convent in the guise of a handsomely attired French gentleman during the pandemic of 1464.⁹⁴ On learning that several nuns at the convent were sick, he struck the ground with his sword, declared the convent free from plague, and bid the nuns perform devotions in honour of St Sebastian. After drinking from the convent's well, the visitor departed. Once news of the convent's miraculous visitation spread, its well acquired thaumaturgical properties and many people were attracted to the convent seeking protection from the

⁹⁰ On St Sebastian as an *alter Christus* and the Eucharistic connotations of Sebastian's wounds, see Marshall (1994), pp. 495-500, and Meilman (2000), pp. 36 ff.

⁹¹ Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 214.

⁹² Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 215.

⁹³ St Bernardine was also invoked against the plague which (if not exceptional for a mendicant saint) may be explained by his biography. Like his legendary counterpart Roch, as a young man Bernardine had risked his life working in a hospital during a pandemic, and he is also said to have persuaded the Venetian authorities to build the hospital of Lazaretto Vecchio. See respectively Vauchez (1993), p. 133, and Tramontin (1971), p. 62. In his preaching he sometimes used plague as a metaphor, elsewhere he referred to its sinful causes and spiritual cures, for instance Bernardino da Siena (1989), II, XLI, p. 1211; *ibid.*, XLV, p. 1351.

⁹⁴ The manuscript was published and reconstructed by Schupbach (1979).

plague.⁹⁵ The inclusion of St Sebastian in the *St Roch Altarpiece* at S. Eufemia would therefore have reminded confraternity members and visitors of the great honour paid to the Giudecca island by the saint's visitation and the special favour he had extended to local people.

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St Louis of Toulouse completed the youthful triumvirate of the *St Roch Altarpiece*. The reasons for the inclusion of St Louis (or, locally, Alvise) are unclear. However, Louis of Toulouse was evidently a very popular saint in Venice, being the namesake saint of many local men and represented many times in Venetian altarpieces. The saint may therefore have been included as a personal patron saint, perhaps of the *gastaldo* of the confraternity, or of an important benefactor whose testament or gift had benefited the *scuola* or helped fund the altarpiece. It is also possible the *scuola* at S. Eufemia was formally dedicated to Saints Sebastian and Louis of Toulouse, as well as Roch, for it was not unusual for a *scuola* to have more than one dedicatory saint, an arrangement which may have served to distinguish local confraternities sharing the same principal titular. As noted above, the second *scuola* established at San Zulian was dedicated to St Nicholas as well as Roch.

Something of the appearance of St Louis of Toulouse may be surmised from depictions of this saint in the 1476 *Bari Altarpiece* (fig. 0.15) and the *Morano Calabro Polyptych* (S. Bernardino, Morano Calabro) of the following year (although the latter was evidently largely produced by the workshop.) In both cases the young bishop-saint is depicted in the customary way, as fairly youthful, with a crosier, bejewelled mitre and bishop's cope over a Franciscan habit.

Commercial Matters

The 1480 date of the altarpiece indicates that Bartolomeo could have taken as long as two years to finish it – assuming that the *Scuola di San Rocco* at S. Eufemia was established in 1478 and the artist was commissioned shortly thereafter. (This is speculative, but the prevailing climate of emergency and the expectation of

⁹⁵ Schupach (1979) cites the contemporary manuscript which relates this tale, and suggests that the miracle was forgotten in the earlier sixteenth-century, to be vigorously revived with the great plague of 1576-77.

thaumaturgical benefits associated with establishment of a *scuola* and the raising of Roch's image would have stirred the members to commission their altarpiece expeditiously.) A lead time of up to two years would have been tardy by comparison with the ten months Bartolomeo required for the *Polyptych of the Madonna* made for Domenico Diedo in his early career, and the eight months stipulated in the contract for the 1484 *Dormition of the Virgin*: what might explain this possible inefficiency? Of course, the 1478 plague could well have affected the artist's business in several ways – for instance, Bartolomeo's studio could have suffered disruption and setbacks due to loss of personnel, which would also help explain why Bartolomeo relied on unsatisfactory assistance in the 1480s.⁹⁶ On the other hand, fear of disease and the attendant recourse to the saints may have stimulated demand for altarpieces, and the shop may have briefly increased its market share following the untimely death in 1478 of important rival Marco Zoppo.⁹⁷ Losses make it impossible to ascertain the true output of the studio, but it is clear that a number of significant contracts were undertaken around this time, including the 1478 *Bragora Altarpiece*, the 1480 *Zumpano Triptych*, the *Altamura Polyptych* (surviving panels of Saints Nicholas, Clare, Catherine and Bernardine, Pinacoteca Provinciale, Bari),⁹⁸ a major job which would have occupied a good deal of the workshop resources, and the *San Vidal Triptych*, which may be dated to c. 1479 (fig. 6.10).⁹⁹

It is clear that in the late 1470s Bartolomeo was under pressure to meet his contractual obligations, and he therefore continued with the strategy he had adopted since the middle of the decade, personally attending to local and more prestigious commissions,

⁹⁶ On the social and economic impact of the plague in Venice, see Mueller in Mason Rinaldi (1979), pp. 71-76 and pp. 93-98. See the conclusion here on the compromised quality of Bartolomeo's late export altarpieces.

⁹⁷ It is unclear whether Zoppo's death was caused by the 1478 plague. Chapman (1998), p. 9.

⁹⁸ Pallucchini (1962), p. 125, cat. 187-90, dates the *Altamura Polyptych* to the late 1470s.

⁹⁹ Ridolfi (1999), p. 54, briefly noted the *San Vidal Triptych* as follows: 'La quarta [tavola] in san Vitale di san Rocco, e due Santi.' Pallucchini (1962), p. 123, cat. 177-78, located this work between the 1473 *St Augustine Polyptych* and the 1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych*, but it is better dated to the end of the decade. As the lost central panel featured St Roch, the arrival of the cult in Venice in about 1478 provides an approximate *terminus post quem* for it, and stylistically, the surviving panels of Saints Lawrence (damaged) and Nicholas (now S. Stefano, Venice) may be considered immediately antecedent to the *St Roch Altarpiece* made for S. Eufemia; St Nicholas retains a more naturalistic appearance than similar figures dating from the early 1480s, his physiognomy and beard, described in tight spiral-curls, recall the St Peter of the 1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych*. As it was possibly Bartolomeo's first depiction of St Roch, the loss of the San Vidal panel depicting Roch is particularly unfortunate. Nothing is known about the commissioning of the triptych.

whilst delegating the execution of altarpieces made for export. Destined for Venetian locations, the *Bragora*, *San Vidal* and *St Roch* altarpieces show the artist's attention to quality, and evidently engaged his hand fairly comprehensively, whereas the coeval *Zumpano Triptych*, made for export to a 'very obscure' and very distant village in Southern Italy, is rightly considered a studio piece.¹⁰⁰

The Place of the *St Roch Altarpiece* in the Artist's *Oeuvre*, and the Development of the *St Roch* Iconography

Whilst the *St Roch Altarpiece* may have been articulated in the Paduan format with a classicising frame, hardly novel in a Venetian context, it was a decidedly up-to-date design compared to the traditional gothic-framed polyptychs which Bartolomeo's studio made for export, such as the *Zumpano Triptych* or the 1485 *Arbe Polyptych* (fig. 6.11). On the other hand, its more traditional characteristics are consonant with the commission by a popular sodality in a climate of competitive display, which encompassed crowd-pleasing processions and spectacles as much as the accoutrements of church altars. The polyptych format and extensive use of gold leaf in the *St Roch Altarpiece* probably reflected officers' aspirations to enhance the confraternity's honour through ostentation of a complex and intrinsically precious object, analogous to the way the altarpiece made for the future Scuola Grande di San Rocco (to which Antonello contributed the Vienna *St Sebastian*) took the form of a traditional mixed-media polyptych – a large, complex and undoubtedly impressive object. That work certainly reflected the popular constitution of the commissioning sodality, which was also renowned for the impressive floats it presented at religious processions, such as the tableau comprising 'a great wooden San Rocco dressed in gold, with a live boy as an angel showing him the plague...' which featured in the procession on the feast of the Madonna in 1515.¹⁰¹

The semi-narrative central panel of the 1480 *St Roch Altarpiece* signalled a new approach to Bartolomeo's polyptych composition which he would employ extensively in his last decade. In place of the centralised iconic figure set against a plain background, a group of polyptychs, commencing with the *St Roch*, comprise a central panel depicting a narrative moment set in a stylised landscape, with saints in side panels

¹⁰⁰ Griffiths (1976), p. 26; Pallucchini (1962), p. 125, cat. 191.

¹⁰¹ Cited Pullan (1971), pp. 53-54.

retaining a strictly iconic appearance. Although novel to Bartolomeo's independent oeuvre, the format is indebted to earlier Vivarini models, which in turn relied on Venetian tradition. For example, the 1447 *Nativity Polyptych* (fig. 0.05) by Antonio and Giovanni d'Alemagna comprises a nativity scene flanked by standing saints (Bartolomeo derived the exceptional composition of his studio's 1475 *Conversano Polyptych* in part from this work.) Similarly, the 1464 *Osimo Polyptych* (fig. 0.13) by Antonio and Bartolomeo includes an abbreviated, static Coronation of the Virgin at its centre with flanking saints in side panels, a work which owes much to earlier Venetian polyptychs such as the *Coronation Polyptych* by Jacobello del Fiore (1415, duomo, Teramo).

Examples of this iconic–narrative–iconic arrangement in Bartolomeo's late oeuvre include the 1486 *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* (fig. 6.07), which shows St Christopher conveying the infant Christ in the centre, with the saints in the side and upper panels represented iconically. Whilst the background of the central panel could be read as a sort of extended saintly attribute, as in Antonio Vivarini's depictions of this saint, here the scene is animated by a breeze which billows the figures' garments, and forward motion is conveyed by the infant's outstretched arm and St Christopher's slight *contrapposto* stance, his gigantic form described by his domination of the panel and the way the cornice closely crops the figure; unfortunately, the thoughtful design of the panel is compromised by its poor execution. As noted above, in some respects the figure of St Roch in the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych* is a mechanical studio re-working of the saint in the S. Eufemia altarpiece, in reduced dimensions and reversed left-to-right; however, as the figure appears here in a side panel, the narrative components of the 1480 version, such as the angel and the cityscape, have been eliminated and Roch simply displays his wound for the viewer's contemplation.¹⁰²

Other examples of this arrangement include the 1485 mixed-media *Arbe Polyptych* (fig. 6.11; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), where the ascension appears at the centre of the upper order (a wooden *Pietà* occupies the central section of the lower order), and the uncharacteristically dramatic *St George* panel of the same year (fig. 6.13; State

¹⁰² The smaller proportions of the *Melzi d'Eril* panel would have prevented the direct use of any cartoon remaining from the production of the S. Eufemia altarpiece (the panel of the *Melzi d'Eril* depicting St Roch is 31cm shorter than the equivalent panel in the S. Eufemia altarpiece).

Museums, Berlin), which almost certainly formed the central narrative of a polyptych; this panel does not conform to the private devotional type, and it includes an inscription: FACTVM · VENETIIS · PER BARTHOLOMEVM / VIVA · RINVM DE MVRIANO PINXIT · 1485, the presence of the inscription indicates the panel was at the centre of an altarpiece, while the form ‘factum venetiis’ usually denotes a work made for export (confirmed by the dubious anatomy of the saint). It was probably housed in a gothic frame similar to that of the *Arbe Polyptych*, as the outline of the painted surface at the top of the panel would allow for a wide, cusped ogee aperture. The animated scene of St George fighting the dragon apparently derives from Cosmé Tura’s energetic depiction of the same subject on the Ferrara Duomo organ shutters (fig. 6.12; 1469, canvas, Museo del Duomo, Ferrara), although the panel lacks the power, grace and confident stylisation of Tura’s work. The Ferrarese source raises the possibility that Bartolomeo travelled to Ferrara at some time after 1470 when the organ was installed.¹⁰³ Bartolomeo’s Berlin *St George* contrasts with iconic depictions of St George which form side panels in the *Zumpano* and *Arbe* altarpieces, where the saint stands atop the conquered dragon which functions as an attribute. Similarly animated, and still more poorly executed, is the central panel of Bartolomeo’s last dated work, the *St Martin Triptych* (fig. 8.08; 1491, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo), which shows St Martin dividing his cloak, flanked by iconic images of the Baptist and Saint Sebastian.

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At the end of the fifteenth-century Bartolomeo’s S. Eufemia and San Vidal *St Roch* altarpieces numbered among few significant images of the saint in metropolitan Venice, and were probably the earliest panel depictions of the saint found locally. He was thus placed to influence the iconography of the newly-adopted saint, although losses of key works make his contribution difficult to measure. Almost nothing is known about Bartolomeo’s lost San Vidal panel, nor how the altarpiece was displayed, whilst the S. Eufemia altarpiece was not perhaps well located to become widely known (although it is possible the Giudecca’s connections with the cult of Saint Sebastian attracted large numbers of local people to the altar of St Roch). On the other hand, the slightly earlier, wooden St Roch in the centre of the altarpiece made for the future Scuola Grande di

¹⁰³ See Campbell (1997), pp. 131 ff, on the organ shutters.

San Rocco, would have functioned as the principal focus of the local cult, although the loss of this figure impedes conclusions as to the extent to which it informed the iconographic development of the saint. Given the wood medium and the traditional format of the San Zulian altar, it can however be surmised that the figure was articulated iconically, with the saint perhaps displaying the bubo to a viewer, and without the narrative detail with which Bartolomeo enlivened his depiction of the saint.

Other works depicting Roch included the altarpiece at the Muranese church of San Pietro Martire by Andrea da Murano (fig. 6.14) which was apparently informed by Bartolomeo's altarpiece at S. Eufemia. Comprising three panels of a similar height, with a segmental lunette set over, Andrea's altarpiece was also articulated in the Paduan format. Whilst the figure of Roch in the central panel of Andrea's work is similarly attired to the saint in Bartolomeo's altarpiece, there is no narrative component. Unusually, each of four thaumaturges is supplicated by a donor, which emphasises the salutary potential of the altarpiece and confraternal devotions. (Donor portraits are notably excluded from Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece*, although such figures were by no means prerequisite in *scuola* altarpieces.)

The form and iconography of a miniature depicting St Roch in the 1496 *mariegola* of the *scuola* dedicated to Saints Roch and Nicholas at San Zulian relates the same moment described by Bartolomeo (fig. 6.15). The hand of the unknown miniaturist is not distant from Bartolomeo's, and the artist could well have trained in his studio (the 'circle of' Andrea da Murano is tentatively suggested by Mason-Rinaldi).¹⁰⁴ Following the general composition of Bartolomeo's altarpiece, the miniature notably includes an angel, here shown descending from the sky, at the presumed moment of healing. Significantly, this scene deviates from the versified hagiography in the *mariegola* which the miniature was presumably intended to illustrate: like Diedo's text, the verses make no mention of the appearance of any angel during Roch's sojourn outside Piacenza, but more significantly, the verse states the miraculous healing occurred whilst Roch slept.¹⁰⁵ Thus the visual precedent of the S. Eufemia altarpiece had supplanted the intended textual source in informing the *mariegola* illustration.

¹⁰⁴ Mason-Rinaldi (1979), p. 233, a6.

¹⁰⁵ BMC, classe IV (Mariegole), 117, Gr.

The figure of Roch in Cima's *Olera Polyptych* (fig. 6.16; c. 1489, parish church, Olera, near Bergamo), and *Mestre Triptych* (fig. 6.17; this panel, Musée des Beaux Arts, Strasbourg) made for the eponymous *scuola* in Mestre, appear to be informed by Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece*. Roch appears in a similar stance, the composition is likewise bisected by the long staff, and he lifts his tunic to reveal the bubo on his thigh. Narrative elements are excluded from the Olera and Mestre altarpieces, although the Mestre altarpiece includes a landscape background, which features the long, winding road denoting arduous journeys made in God's service. Titian's depiction of Roch in his early *St Mark Altarpiece* (fig. 3.28) bears a notably Christ-like appearance, with long hair, wide brow and mild gaze, quite different from the powerfully muscular Roch appearing in his *St Roch* woodcut (fig. 6.18; early 1520s) which was published in support of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Nevertheless, the print follows the local tradition which may be associated with Bartolomeo, equivocating between the iconic and narrative in the central image depicting the healing of Roch, a hopeful promise to the afflicted. The composition of the central 'panel' of the print is still closer to the 1496 *mariegola* miniature, with a small angel appearing from the upper left. Titian's other sources, perhaps textual, are evident in the appearance of the succouring dog from beyond the confines of the 'frame', to my knowledge not hitherto a feature of the Venetian iconography. As the print was made to raise funds through sales, it must have been produced in quantity and was, no doubt, widely circulated and iconographically influential.

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The fine image of St Roch on the altar of the *scuola* at S. Eufemia would have fulfilled several important functions for the members of the confraternity which commissioned it: it was perhaps an *ex-voto* offering, the focus of devotional observance and religious rites, and a source of comfort to those who sought the Saint's protection and thaumaturgical powers in the face of recurrent pestilence. Contemporary texts, most influentially that of Francesco Diedo, promulgated the cult encouraging the establishment of corporations devoted to the saint as a means of combating the plague, lauding Roch as an *exemplum* of Christian charity and presenting him as a latter-day *alter Christus*. Bartolomeo's description of Roch was probably informed by themes in

Diedo's text, and Bartolomeo analogously presented Roch in Christ's image with a bubo resembling the wound in Christ's side which connotes the Eucharistic sacrifice. This was also the first important work where Bartolomeo rendered the central subject of an altarpiece in a semi-narrative way; by showing the moment in which St Roch was miraculously healed, Bartolomeo's work must have promised hope to the devotees of the zealously promulgated cult, newly arrived in Venice. The iconic and narrative ambivalence which distinguishes Bartolomeo's *St Roch Altarpiece* was, if not his own invention, an iconography he propagated in Venice and perhaps beyond, given that, with the *translatio* of the saint's body to the city, Venice became the *de facto* centre of the cult.

The Bernardo Family and the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (1482)

*'Voglio che...sia fato zelebrar una messa ogni zorno al altar dela nostra chapella per anima mia, se di mie'*¹

The *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* 'belong[s]...to the new world of the renaissance',² and attests to Bartolomeo Vivarini's continuing formal development and his continued ability to attract local clients of the highest calibre. With the exception of the enigmatic San Geminiano panels made shortly before the artist's death, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* (fig. 7.01) is the last known altarpiece that Bartolomeo made for the local market and therefore provides the subject of this final case-study.³ The altarpiece is signed and dated: BARTHOLOMEVS VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PINXIT. 1482., and not only retains its formal integrity, but remains in its impressive original setting, the Bernardo family chapel at the Frari (fig. 7.02). In the central panel appear the Madonna and Child Enthroned (175 x 75 cm), above which is a half-length depiction of the Man of Sorrows (104 x 75 cm); Saints Andrew and Nicholas of Bari appear in the left-hand panel (171 x 68 cm); and Saints Paul and Peter in the right-hand panel (171 x 68 cm). The impressive Lombardesque gilded frame of the altarpiece remains intact, its pilasters decorated in *bas-relief* with foliage springing from amphora-like vases and crowned with composite capitals. Immediately below the pilasters, four *tondi* punctuate the frame's base, also replete with foliate relief. Framed by laurel wreaths, the inner *tondi* depict Saints Francis and Sebastian, and at the outer extremes appear the Bernardo family crests. A pair of carved adoring angels, gilded and polychromed, is set over the side panels, flanking the Man of Sorrows (although the flamboyant style of carving indicates these may be a later addition).

¹ Will of Lorenzo q. Andrea Bernardo, ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 957, 136v - 138r. (Also *ibid.*, b. 956, no. 398).

² Goffen (1986a), pp. 46-47.

³ The S. Geminiano panels, *Saints Barbara and Mary Magdalene* (1990, Accademia, Venice) will be discussed briefly in the concluding chapter.

Until now the Bernardo branch, or family members, responsible for the chapel and the commissioning of its altarpiece have remained anonymous because of the absence of any contract for the altarpiece or documents regarding the appropriation of the chapel. However, it was not previously observed that the saints depicted in the altarpiece side panels are name-saints of four Bernardo brothers who were born at the turn of the century and who died a few years before the altarpiece was commissioned; the case will be presented that the altarpiece was commissioned by the heirs of the four brothers in memory of their fathers' generation. Through consideration of the relatively rich unpublished sources regarding the chapel, together with the altarpiece programme, it will also be shown how the altarpiece was created as a commemorative and dynastic – as much as a liturgical – object, and the ways in which the altarpiece functioned as a principal component of a patrician funerary chapel will also be revealed.

The Bernardo Family and their Chapel at the Frari

The Bernardo family chapel is the third to the right of the high altar, one of six spatially uniform chapels parallel to the Frari chancel (fig. 3.02). This was a favoured location, as proximity to the high altar afforded the frequent sound 'of eucharistic celebration [which touched] the departed ... by transforming words of death and resurrection'.⁴ Like the other chapels, the Bernardo chapel is narrow and high-vaulted; its floor is raised above that of the main vessel of the church and is approached by three steps. Before the chapel entrance are two early seventeenth-century Bernardo family floor-tombs. A low seventeenth-century(?) balustrade, inset with family crests, and a bronze gate which includes medallions of the Virgin and Child and St Anthony of Padua, restricts admission to the chapel. There are no obvious signs on the composite stone piers flanking the chapel entrance that the Bernardo chapel was originally confined by a high gate.

The chapel floor is paved in alternate squares of white and red marble. Before the altar is a floor tomb inscribed and dated 1363, and a fine fourteenth-century wall-tomb dominates the right-hand wall (fig. 7.03), below which is set a plaque dated 1500 (discussed below). Like the altarpiece, the most important iconographic elements of the wall-tomb are the Virgin and Child Enthroned, finely-carved figures set in its central field. Male and female saints, not readily identifiable, flank the Virgin; intermediary

⁴ Grubb (1996), p. 71, makes these observations in reference to the tomb of the Arnaldi family in the chapel of the Baptist in Vicenza Cathedral.

fields, which on similar tombs comprised narrative scenes or perhaps coats of arms, are filled incongruously with plain porphyry (?), probably a later modification. At the outer corners of the tomb are Saints James the Great and John the Baptist, not onomastic saints of those interred therein.⁵ The Bernardo crest appears on the right flank of the wall tomb, on its corbels, and is also emblazoned twice on the supporting wall so as to frame its top. These arms are the only significant extant painted decoration on the walls, and their ambitious size may indicate they were executed in a later period. A small polychrome stone crest is set towards the top of the facing wall, and an inconspicuous painted frieze frames the otherwise plain white fields on both lateral walls of the chapel.

Wide brick pilasters with stone capitals divide the main vessel of the chapel from its apse, indicating the point where the apse protrudes from the load-bearing east-end wall of the church. The main vessel of the chapel is covered by a cross vault and the apse vault is formed of four segments also demarcated with brick ribs. Vault cells are decorated with foliate motifs in fresco, in a similar style, though different design, to the vaults of the other east-end chapels. The similarity of execution of the east end chapels indicates their vaults were decorated in the same period (early or mid-fifteenth century) and by the same workshop, with the church evidently maintaining a certain degree of uniformity in the decoration of these private chapels. There is no reason to associate Bartolomeo's shop with the execution of the vault decorations. A pair of tall lancets glazed with plain glass fills the apse behind the altar, admitting intense light and two further blind lancets flank the altar. From the exterior, the blocked lancets are invisible, indicating that they were walled-up when the exterior apse wall was rebuilt or modified at an early date. This modification evidently comprised the continuous brick wall, zig-zag in plan and perhaps half the height of the principal east-end wall, which skims the three chapel apses to the liturgical south of the *cappella maggiore*. A number of other components in the chapel, including a large monument which lines the lower half of the wall to the left of the altar, date from later periods and are therefore excluded from this study.

The establishment of this family chapel at the Frari in the 1470s and the fabrication of its historical associations with the Bernardo family, which will be described below, may

⁵ Wolters (1976), I, cat. 94, p. 194-95.

be interpreted as a mark of the family's social and political achievements in the fifteenth century. The Bernardos were a well-established Venetian patrician family, having numbered amongst the nobility from the time of the *serrata* in the late thirteenth century – but as such they did not count as one of the prestigious *case vecchie*, the oldest and most prestigious patrician houses, which included the Corner and Dolfen clans, and which monopolised the *dogato* until the mid-fifteenth century; no Bernardo had achieved dogeship.⁶ The branch of the family of concern here (fig. 7.04) was based in the parishes of San Polo and San Pantalon near the Frari, although documents show they owned properties all over Venice as well as land and villas on the *terraferma*. As was typical of the Venetian patriciate of the period, wealth had been accumulated through trade. The substantial house of Francesco Bernardo (grandfather of the founders of the Frari chapel) in San Polo was endowed with a number of stores, indicative of mercantile activity and, according to Pillini, Francesco's branch of the family owned several ships which were used for transporting armaments in which they traded.⁷

Francesco Bernardo's sons, Andrea, Nicolò, Polo (Paolo) and Piero, were 'represented' together in the chapel altarpiece through the images of their namesake saints who flank the Virgin, with Francesco himself commemorated in the *tondo* of St Francis appearing in the altarpiece predella. The four brothers were born around the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and would become extremely prominent and successful. Piero Bernardo married Camilla Foscari, daughter of long-serving Doge Francesco (*dogato* 1423-57), which proved a profitable, and no doubt prestigious, connection for the Bernardo family – at least until Foscari was disgraced.⁸ In 1430 Nicolò founded the important bank Nicolò Bernardo e Compagni which, as one half of a duopoly, would dominate the Venetian banking market to the end of the century, advancing significant sums to the State when required; Nicolò was rewarded with election to the prestigious post of Procurator of St Mark's in 1458.⁹ Polo was himself elected Procurator of St

⁶ The *case vecchie* are listed by Romanin (1972-75) p. 305, n. 59.

On the families which joined the nobility from the time of the *serrata* see Chonjacki (1997) p. 655, table I-A, 'Le casate nobiliari veneziane del periodo della Serrata presenti nel secolo XV'.

⁷ Pillini (1967), p. 305. Documents pertaining to the division of Francesco Bernardo's estate provide information on his house. ASV, Archivio Privato Bernardo-Giauna, b. 4.

⁸ Bastianelli (1967), pp. 303-4.

⁹ The bank was co-run with members of the non-noble Garzoni family, and would later be known as the Bernardo-Garzoni or, simply, Garzoni bank. The bank failed at the end of the fifteenth century. Mueller (1997), p. 50, p. 60 pp. 82-83, pp. 195-96, pp. 217-19, pp. 241-51, and pp. 448-49. Nicolò's brothers Andrea and Polo, who out-survived him (Piero had died decades earlier), must have shared a financial interest in the bank which was passed on to their heirs - in the case reported by Sanudo, IV, col. 304,

Mark's in 1464. Thus Nicolò and Polo Bernardo became colleagues of Bartolomeo's first important commissioner, Procurator Domenico Diedo who was also elected to the office in 1464 (chapter 1); whilst Andrea Bernardo's government offices included the role of *Podestà* of Padua and co-leadership of the Council of Ten.¹⁰

It appears the four Bernardo brothers predeceased the appropriation of the Frari chapel, as well as the creation in 1482 of the altarpiece which commemorates them. Piero died early, before 1433;¹¹ Polo wrote his will in 1468, by which date he was sick and elderly;¹² Nicolò had died by 1472 and Andrea between 1467 and 1470.¹³ During their lifetime the chapel was dedicated to the Blessed Gentile da Matelica and, according to Sartori, it was only appropriated by the Bernardo family in 'about 1482' a date presumably taken from the inscription on the altarpiece.¹⁴ However, the *terminus ante quem* for the *juspatronatus* of the chapel can be moved back three years, by dint of the 1479 testament of Elena Bernardo (née Querini), daughter-in-law of Andrea.¹⁵ Elena's will is the earliest of a number of Bernardo testaments here identified which explicitly refer to the chapel, and it indicates the *juspatronatus* of the chapel was acquired by the Bernardo brothers' heirs shortly after the older generation passed away.

It does not seem likely that Andrea Bernardo or his brothers established the family chapel posthumously by testamentary instructions, as was the case with the Corner chapel discussed in chapter 3. The Bernardo brothers' surviving wills, in contrast to those of their heirs, do not exhibit any great allegiance to the Frari church.¹⁶ For example, Polo requested masses be said for his soul at his local parish church of San

following the collapse of the bank, financial suits were brought unsuccessfully against the heirs of all three brothers.

¹⁰ Martinioni in Sansovino provides the accession dates of Nicolò and Polo. Sansovino (1998) 'Cronico Veneto' pp. 49-50. For Andrea see Bastianelli (1967), pp. 303-4.

¹¹ Piero's estate was administered by his widow Camilla. 'N.D. Camilla Foscari ved. e commissaria del fù Pietro Bernardo'. Division of the estate of Francesco Bernardo. ASV, Archivio Privato Bernardo-Giauna, b. 4.

¹² ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 823, no. 144.

¹³ Nicolò is recorded as having married for the first time in 1408. He had died by 1472 when his grandson 'Francesco Bernardo di S Benitto q. Nicolo' was married. BMC, Codice Cicogna, 3638. Andrea wrote his will in 1467, ASV, sez. not. b. 823, no.8; he had died by 1470, when he was listed as the late father of his son Zuan: 'S Zuan Bernardo q. S Andrea...', BMC, Codice Cicogna 3638. The will of Andrea's daughter-in-law, Marina, wife of Lorenzo Bernardo, confirms Andrea died sometime before 1476. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 86.

¹⁴ Sartori (1949), pp. 115-16, 'verso 1482'; Sartori did not furnish sources for the former dedication of the chapel.

¹⁵ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 86, no. 24; BMC, Codice Cicogna 3638.

¹⁶ No wills have been found for Piero and Nicolò q. Francesco; it is likely that Piero was intestate when he died at a relatively young age.

Polo;¹⁷ whereas Polo's son Francesco, whilst also stipulating masses at this church, provided for 'a chaplain to say mass every day in our chapel at the [church of the] Friars Minor, and for his mercy he should have twelve ducats a year'.¹⁸

In 1467, when Andrea left the modest sum of ten ducats to the Frari, he did not request burial there, nor did he mention any family chapel.¹⁹ Yet the inscription and placement of the chapel's floor tomb, set before the altar, implies that Andrea himself had established the chapel. The tomb is dedicated to Andrea and his heirs: SEPULTURA DNI. ANDREA BERNARDVS [QUONDAM] DNI FRANCISCI ET SVOR HERED.M MCCCLXIII (*sic*).²⁰

With the inclusion of Saints Andrew and Francis, the iconography of the altarpiece is visually connected with the tomb, as was also the case with the Dolfin tomb, considered in chapter 2 here. But new documentary evidence shows the fourteenth-century date is spurious, as the inscription was arranged in the mid-*cinquecento* by the testament of Andrea's grandson Sebastiano, who was about ten years old when the altarpiece was painted and whose namesake saint appeared in one of the *tondi* of the predella. When Sebastiano wrote his will in 1543, he was now about seventy years old and 'infirm of body', he desired burial in the floor tomb of the chapel: 'When it happens that I shall die, I want to be buried in our low[er] tomb in our chapel at the Friars Minor...'.²¹

Sebastiano requested an inscription be made on the tomb in accordance with instructions he had given his son.²² The style of the script on the floor tomb indicates this inscription was indeed executed in the *cinquecento* rather than the *trecento*.

Sebastiano also composed an inscription for the altar steps: 'I will that there be incised on the altar steps of our chapel those verses which I have noted down and given to [my son] Andrea'.²³ It is unfortunate that Sebastiano did not elaborate on these verses of

¹⁷ It should be noted that Polo Bernardo's will is not readily legible, and was subject to a number of deletions. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 823, no. 144.

¹⁸ 'uno mansionario che ogni di diga messa nela Capella nostra ai fra minori, et per sua mercede habi duc. xij al anno'. In his will of 1516 Francesco specified a number of details for his funeral, although he did not state his actual place of burial – it is reasonable to infer that he too would have been buried in the family chapel. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 203, cte. 74 v.

¹⁹ 'al convento di frati minori de la cha grande ducati diese'. ASV, sez. not. testamenti, b. 823, no. 8.

²⁰ 'Burial place of Sir Andrea Bernardo q. Sir Francesco and his heirs 1363.'

²¹ Sebastiano is described as 'infermo de corpo'; '...Quando lacadera che io mora voio esser sepulto in la nostra archa abasso in la nostra capella ai fra minori...'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

²² '...et cusi [sia int[agli]a] le letere su larcha..'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

²³ '...voio che sia int[agli]a* su li scalini del altar de la nostra capella quelli versi che ho dato in nota a Andrea' *two words superimposed, the overwritten word may be 'scripta', which has been replaced with 'Int..a.'. Here Sebastiano is evidently referring to 'Andrea mio fiol', namesake of Sebastiano's grandfather. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

which today there is no trace and no record; it seems the altar *mensa* and steps were subsequently replaced.²⁴

The inscription set below the fourteenth-century wall-tomb was instead organised by Sebastiano's brother, Piero Bernardo. It identifies the tomb as the burial site of Andrea q. Francesco's sons Gerolamo and Lorenzo: HIERONIMO PATRI LAVRENTIO PAT/RVO VIRIS ILLVSTRIIS ET OPTIMIS / PATRIE BENEMERITIS PETRVS BER/NARDVS PIETATIS CVLTOR SVO/RVM MEMOR HOC CONSECRAVIT OB M D MENSIS APR.²⁵ In his will of 1498, Lorenzo q. Andrea (c.1441-1500), had indeed stipulated burial in the wall tomb: 'first I pray my aforementioned executors have my body put in the high tomb in our chapel at the [church of the] Friars Minor, where my beloved consort Marina was placed, on whose soul our Most holy God have mercy and [may He] grant her eternal life. Amen'.²⁶ Lorenzo also stipulated there 'be celebrated masses for [my] soul continuously for three days at the Friars Minor...' and '...that [for] a year there[after] be celebrated a mass every day at the altar of our chapel for my soul and the souls of my kin'.²⁷ No will has been found for Gerolamo Bernardo (c. 1435 - before 1498).

The interment of brothers Lorenzo and Gerolamo q. Andrea in the wall tomb of the chapel, together with the other circumstantial evidence, points to their *juspatronatus* of the Bernardo chapel, and it is also reasonable to suppose their responsibility for its establishment and decoration. Other siblings or cousins could have collaborated, including their brother 'doctor and knight' Antonio Bernardo, perhaps the most successful and erudite of Andrea's sons. Amongst his career achievements, Antonio numbered a Professorship at Padua University, membership of the Council of Ten, and several senior government posts on the *terraferma*.²⁸ Antonio was publicly credited for his outstanding services – his portrait hung with those of other illustrious Venetians in the Great Council chamber of the Ducal Palace; in a Vicentine inscription he was

²⁴ The inscription on the altar steps is omitted from Cicogna's detailed records, which indicates it had been either obscured or removed by the early nineteenth century. BMC, Codice Cicogna, 2009.

²⁵ 'To Gerolamo, his father, and Lorenzo, his uncle, illustrious and excellent men, worthy of their nation, Pietro Bernardo, pious custodian of their memory, dedicated this. April 1500.'

²⁶ '...prima priego li dicti mie chomessarii fazino meter el corpo mio nel archa alta nela nostra chapella ali frati minori, dove fo posta la mia dilecta consorta Marina, al anima dela qual el nostro Sanctissimo dio habia remission e doni vita eterna amen.' Will of Lorenzo q. Andrea Bernardo, ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 957 136v-138r. (also *ibid.*, b. 956, no. 398.)

²⁷ '...sia fato zelebrar zorni tre...continui ali frati minori mese per lanima...' '...Volgio che uno anno sia fato zelebrar una messa ogni zorno al altar dela nostra chapella per anima mia se di mie'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 957 136v - 138r.

²⁸ See various documents cited below and Caravale (1967).

commemorated for a program of urban renewal; and ‘Antonio Bernardo Dottore’ was said to have commemorated Doge Cristoforo Moro (d. 1471) at the Doge’s funeral service held at the Frari itself.²⁹ Although no will has been located for Antonio, as early as 1479 his wife Elena mentioned the chapel in her will, as we have seen. Elena had provided a conspicuous bequest for funerary masses: ‘I leave to the friars of the [Frari church] six-hundred ducats in bonds...with this the aforesaid friars be obliged to say every day a mass for my soul, in perpetuity. And every year they shall perform a memorial High mass in our chapel’.³⁰

It is worth noting the striking iconographic coincidence of the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* with the name and devotional inclinations of Maria Bernardo (née Contarini), wife of Gerolamo – specifically the iconic images of the Virgin Mary, the dead Christ and St Sebastian. Maria may have been particularly devoted to St Sebastian – it is notable that her son Sebastiano, born a few years after the pandemic of 1468, was blessed with this prophylactic name, instead of being named after a Bernardo ancestor or relative according to the family tradition.³¹ Maria provided for her own burial in ‘archa nostra’ (our tomb) in the Bernardo chapel as a contingency, but expected ultimately to be buried in her own chapel at the church of San Sebastiano (where the co-dedicatee was the Virgin Mary). The *titulus* of Maria’s chapel was to be the Body of Christ: ‘in the church of San Sebastiano I want to be buried in my chapel in my tomb,...that is in the aforesaid church San Sebastiano, before the altar of *Corpus Christi* ...’.³² Maria could have influenced the iconography of the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece*, or indeed acted as the family’s representative in the absence of her husband and brothers-in-law. Although

²⁹ The portraits in the Great Council would have been destroyed in the infamous fire of 1577. The Vicentine inscription is cited in Caravale (1967), p. 305: ‘urbe pontibus carcere foro templis exornata’. Caravale also noted Antonio’s anti-Semitic views – in the cited inscription Antonio was also credited with having expelled the Jewish community from Vicenza.

Sansovino (1998), p. 579, stated that Antonio Bernardo delivered the oration at Doge Moro’s funeral, although Da Mosto (1977), p. 183 (un-referenced), observed that some sources instead name Andrea Donà.

³⁰ ‘...laso ali frati de la caxagrande ducati siecento de imprestidi...con questo che li diti fanti sia obliga dir ogni zorno in perpetuo una messa per lanima mia: Et ogni anno fazi losequio con luna messa granda ala nostra capella.’ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 86, no. 24.

³¹ Collange (2000), p. 189, noted a general increase in the incidence of names of protector saints Sebastiano and Antonio in the aftermath of plague outbreaks.

³² ‘ecclesiam... Sancti Sebastiani vollo illiud ...sepeliatur in capella mea in archa mea...que est in ecclesia predicta sancti Sebastiani ante altare Corporis Christo...’. Maria (or Marina as she was sometimes called) wrote her wills in 1500 and 1508 respectively. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 956, nos. 480 and 477. Cicogna (1834), p. 178, recorded the inscription to Maria Bernardo ‘al altare del Cristo’: MARIAE CONTARENO / HIERONIMI BERNARDI / VXORI OPTIME / LAVRENTIVS NEPOS / P.C. / OBIT ANNO / MDXXVIII. The inscription is extant, although the altar *mensa* and any altarpiece commissioned by Maria Bernardo for the tiny side chapel were evidently replaced in a later period.

Sanudo's diaries relate to a period starting just over a decade after the installation of the altarpiece, it is clear from these and other sources that the Bernardo men were detained away from Venice for extended periods on high-level government business. That Maria later commissioned her own burial chapel within her lifetime, dealing directly with the monastery church of San Sebastiano, demonstrates she was not averse to such an undertaking.³³ She also enjoyed the high esteem of her brother-in-law Lorenzo, who recorded his deep gratitude and affection towards her in his will.³⁴

In 1500, the same auspicious holy year that the inscription was raised to Lorenzo and Gerolamo, indulgences were granted to visitors to the chapel on the feast days of their eponymous saints, Jerome and Lawrence, and on the feast days of Saints Anthony and Elisabeth, namesakes of their brother Antonio and sister-in-law Isabeta (It. Elisabetta) Bernardo.³⁵

Indulgence of one hundred days granted by the Apostolic Legate to all those who are repentant and have confessed [their sins], who visit the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the Church of the [Friars] Minor in Venice, in which the noblemen of the Bernardo family have particular devotion, and that is on the feast-days of St. Jerome, Saint Anthony, Saint Elisabeth and Saint Lorenzo, and on the anniversary of the dedication of the chapel...and [be extended] to all those who lend a hand towards the above-mentioned festivities...³⁶

The onomastic coincidences of the feast-days celebrated in the chapel indicates their commemorative significance. As the saints in the altarpiece memorialised Andrea's

³³ A cash payment was recorded in the San Sebastiano archive, from Maria Bernardo for the construction of her chapel: 'Adi 27 Aprile 1506 vel circha recevette el pre fra Marino da Madonna Maria Bernarda per fare la sua cappella in la chiexia nova la sup. Dicta de ducati 50 d'oro.' Cicogna (1834), p. 178.

³⁴ In his will of 1501 Lorenzo q. Andrea left his sister-in-law 100 ducats. He stressed this was as a sign of his affection, as his obligation to her could never be repaid (elsewhere in the testament, it is implied she had brought up Lorenzo's illegitimate children): 'mia dilecta cugnada Madona Maria Bernardo relictà M. Jeronimo per segno de amor duc.... 100/ In qual prego non navedi(?) al obbligo mio verso lei elqual ho grandissimo, ma... per signo de amor et non per satissfaction chel non se poria per mi mai satisfare ala obligation mia verso lei...'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 956, no. 398.

³⁵ Isabeta was widow of Dandolo q. Andrea. Dandolo must have died before 1467 as is evident from the will of Andrea q. Francesco Bernardo written that year. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 823, no. 8; Isabeta was a name shared with other women in the family.

³⁶ 'Indulgenza concessa dal ...Legato Apostolico di giorni cento a tutti quelli che penitenti, e Confessi visiteranno la Capella della Beata Vergine nella chiesa de Minori di Venezia, ne la quale li NN.HH. della famiglia Bernardo hanno particolare divotione, e ciò nelli giorni di S. Girolamo, S Antonio, S Elisabetta, S Lorenzo e della dedicatione di detta Capella dalli primi vespri sino alli secondi vespri inclusione et a tutti quelli, che prestaranno qualche aiuta per la Festivitadi sudette.' ASV, Frari, b. 1., II, no. 50. This record is a summary of the contents of the relevant document. Unfortunately, the original document is lost.

generation, so the celebration in the chapel of certain saints' feast days perhaps functioned as a memorial to the generation which had established it. (It should also be noted that the emotive image of the suffering Christ in the Bernardo altarpiece was particularly apposite for the stimulation of prayer associated with an indulgence, for indulgences were often associated with images – including prints – of Christ on the cross, a *pietà*, the *Arma Cristi* or the mass of St Gregory.³⁷)

The text which records the granting of the indulgence implies the chapel was frequently visited – 'all those... who visit the chapel' – though it is probably inaccurate to suppose this amounted to free public access. Although the extant barrier is not original, there is every reason to suppose that access was always limited by means of a gate of some kind, as was a common arrangement with this type of mendicant church plan. The extent to which the general laity were permitted free access to the parts of the church beyond the choir screen is also moot; as Kempers notes, the pre-Tridentine mendicant church plan (famously preserved at the Frari) employed the area in the nave before the choir for the laity, whereas the choir and chancel were reserved for the friars.³⁸ That said, the establishment of private patrician and *scuola* chapels at the east end of the Frari demonstrates certain lay groups, at least, entered this part of the building.

Sebastiano Bernardo's will suggestively illustrates the sort of funerary and memorial rites and feast-day celebrations performed in the Bernardo family chapel:

...I wish the chapter of our parish [church to attend] my burial. The usual candles should be given to the Scuola [Grande] di San Giovanni [Evangelista] and twelve ducats be distributed to those brethren who accompany the Cross to my burial [together with] the *scuola* of Corpus Christi of our parish...before my burial I want one hundred masses to be said for my soul...I want the masses to be that of St Gregory and of Our Lady.³⁹

³⁷ Swanson (1995), p. 221, supposed that the above-mentioned iconographies 'gained in popularity precisely as much for their associated indulgences as the images they inspired'.

³⁸ Kempers (1992), pp. 36 ff.

³⁹ '...et voio a la mia sepoltura el Capitolo dela nostra contra. La scuola de S Zuane a la qual sia date le cere consuete: et ducati dodese siano dispensadi fra li fradelli che acompagnerano la Croce a la mia sepoltura, et la scuola del corpo de Cristo de la nostra contra... voio che inanti io sia sepolto siano dite messe cento per lanema mia... voio siano dite le messe de S. Gregorio per lanema mia et quelle dela madona'. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

It is reasonable to assume the masses Sebastiano Bernardo prescribed for the benefit of his soul would be performed in the Bernardo chapel. He also mentioned a chantry, evidently implemented in anticipation of his death, which was celebrated there: 'I will that the chantry which I hold be continued for five years after my death; on feast-days mass [be celebrated] in my house, and on the other days in our chapel in the Church of the Frari'.⁴⁰ Unusually, Sebastiano also bequeathed a supper to the friars at the Frari on his *onomastico*: '...after my death I will that there be made a meal which will be the last one [of the day] for the friars at the [convent of the] Friars Minor; and then for the next five years annually on the feast-day of St Sebastian, be given to the said friars half a ducat...to those who say the offices of the dead at my burial.'⁴¹ Most significantly, Sebastiano's will also indicates the particular Marian feast which was celebrated in the chapel: 'I will that continuously for the next ten years after my death my sons give a ducat's worth of fish to the Friars Minor for the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady which is celebrated in our chapel'.⁴² Sebastiano's testament thus demonstrates the central importance of the family chapel to the Bernardo family members in their plans for salvation, and attests the great number and variety of religious ceremonies performed there, or associated with the chapel.

But it seems the family chapel also served another, more worldly, purpose for the Bernardos in signalling the family's importance and venerability. The recycling of the wall tomb and 'false' historic date on the floor tomb, 1363, which anticipates Andrea's death by just over a century, suggests the small and perhaps *arriviste* family attempted to historicise their presence in their private, but publicly visible, chapel.⁴³ The fabrication of history and the appropriation and adaptation of antique artefacts to this

⁴⁰ '....voio che per anni 5 sia continua a tenir el mansionario che io tegno: qual di chi [sic] la festa messa in casa mia, et li altri di in Jesia di frari ne la nostra capella', . ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

⁴¹ '...da poi la mia morte voio sia fatto un pasto che sara lultimo a li fratonzelli di fra minori: et poi per anni 5 continui ogni anno el di de S. Sebastiano sia dato a diti franzelli duc. mezo al anno: li qual dirano lofficio di morti su la mia sepoltura.' ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887.

⁴² '...voio che per anni diese continui mie fioli dagino un ducato de pese a i fra minori per la festa de la presentation de nostra dona si fa in la nostra capella.' . ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887. The significance of the Bernardo chapel as one of the altars dedicated to the Virgin at the Frari is discussed further below.

⁴³ Francesco Bernardo, father of Andrea, wrote his will in 1423 and had died by 1433 when his property was divided. ASV, Archivio privato Bernardo-Giuna, b. 4. Although 'Francesco' could conceivably refer to a fourteenth-century ancestor, no forebear by the name of 'Andrea' has yet come to light. The name could have been intended to refer to Francesco, Andrea's great-grandfather, as may be inferred from what appears to be an early-sixteenth-century marriage record. Andrea's brother Polo is recorded as having married in 1419. His genealogy is given as follows: 'S. Polo Bernardo de s Francesco q S Nicolo q S Francesco q S Otto q S Marco'. BMC, Codice Cicogna 3638.

cause were, after all, a traditional aspect of Venetian myth-making and ancient sepulchres had been re-employed for the earliest ducal burials at SS Giovanni e Paolo. The 'falsification' of the family's ancient *juspatronatus* of the chapel may perhaps be understood in the context of a society where noble status was validated by historicity, where the denomination 'case vecchie' connoted the most distinguished patrician families, a category which, as we have seen, excluded the Bernardo.

The Iconography of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*

It was noted above that the four male saints depicted in the side panels of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* commemorate the brothers Andrea, Nicolò, Polo and Piero Bernardo, whose souls were to be prayed for before this altarpiece, along with the souls of their descendents. Here we revisit and develop a theme considered in relation to the Diedo and Dolfín altarpieces of the first two chapters – to consider the way in which family members may be 'represented' by onomastic saints in an altarpiece and the significance of these images.

In the case of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, it is most improbable the four saints arrayed were painted in the likeness of their earthly namesakes, for they are insufficiently distinguished from other versions of the same figures by the artist, and the physiognomies are fairly stereotypical.⁴⁴ As we have seen, these Bernardo men died before the artist was commissioned and one of them, Piero q. Francesco Bernardo, died early, decades before the altarpiece was made – although St Peter is depicted, as usual, in late middle-age. Nonetheless, it is entirely fitting that in an altarpiece-memorial to the paternal generation the saints are depicted as senior patriarchal figures. The saints were probably intended as hagiographical representatives of their earthly namesakes at a time when donor portraits, in view of the prevailing ideals inhibiting personal promotion, did not usually feature in Venetian altarpieces. Although mores were changing, ostentation in an inappropriate setting was still avoided, especially in the funerary chapels of private individuals or families; as noted in chapter 1, Procurator of St Mark's Pietro Priuli (d. 1493), specifically instructed his executors to exclude his family crest from his burial chapel at S. Michele in Isola, and the very practice of founding a funerary chapel *post mortem*, as was often the case in Venice, has been

⁴⁴ Goffen (1986a) p. 62, likewise does not make this claim for the saints appearing the *Ca' Pesaro Triptych*. She does hypothesise – not convincingly – that the saints' depiction portrayed the character of the Pesaro namesakes. On the practice of guising saints as donors, see Burke (2000), pp. 54 ff.

interpreted as a means of ‘avoiding the charge of self-glorification’.⁴⁵ Consonantly, altarpieces made for private individuals or families almost always exclude donor portraits, whereas they may sometimes be found in confraternity altarpieces, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5, and in ducal votive portraits and tombs. A famous example is the *Dandolo Lunette*, (fig. 7.05; c. 1340, attrib. Paolo Veneziano, Frari) devised for the tomb of Francesco Dandolo, which depicts the Doge and Dogressa Elisabetta presented to the Virgin Mary by their hagiographical namesakes. In the case of non-ducal monuments, visual evidence suggests the Venetian decorum required saints to be depicted without their donor namesakes, although the commemorative intention is essentially similar. In its depiction of saintly namesakes without donors, the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* may be compared to Giovanni Bellini’s *Frari Triptych* (fig. 7.06; 1488) made for the Pesaro family chapel in the Frari where the saints depicted are likewise the name-saints of several brothers.⁴⁶ In Bellini’s triptych the saints ‘represent’ the commissioning generation together with their late father, as Goffen terms it, a memorial ‘before the fact’; whereas, in the case of Bartolomeo’s altarpiece, the very absence of the commissioning generation’s saints is further measure of their decorous self-effacement.

The extent to which this Venetian decorum was gradually compromised from the later fifteenth century is exemplified in the increasing ostentation of funerary monuments. This is most evident in ducal tombs, such as the tomb of Doge Pietro Mocenigo (d. 1476, attrib. Pietro Lombardo, SS Giovanni e Paolo), but is also discernable in the Ferigo Corner tabernacle (Corner chapel, Frari) with its proud inscription. A similar development may be perceived in the donor portraits which occasionally appeared in private chapels. The chapel realised for Procurator Pietro Priuli around the turn of the century not only included the Priuli arms, against the Procurator’s explicit instructions, but the image of the Procurator kneeling before the Virgin was included in its altarpiece (Giovanni Bellini, early 1500s, Kunstsammlungen der Stadt, Düsseldorf).⁴⁷ By the second decade of the sixteenth century, it seems that even large donor portraits, not necessarily of Doges, could now be entertained. Although the donor portraits in Titian’s *Pesaro Altarpiece* (fig. 7.07; 1519-26, Frari) were still extraordinary for

⁴⁵ Hollingsworth (1994), p. 141.

⁴⁶ See below and Humfrey (1993), p. 218, on the hypothesis that the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* was proposed as the model for Bellini’s triptych.

⁴⁷ For Priuli’s instructions, see Meneghin (1962), I, pp. 310-11 and p. 322; and Goffen (1990), p. 176 and p. 316, n. 73.

Venice, and were perhaps admitted due to Jacopo Pesaro's status as a military hero, these, as well as the powerful architectonic setting, are indicative of an increasingly Roman taste for overt magnificence amongst the Venetian patriciate.⁴⁸ Putting aside the complex iconographic arguments which have been made for the *Pesaro Altarpiece*, Titian's masterpiece nevertheless falls into essentially the same genre as Bellini's *Frari Triptych* and the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*: the patron saints of the male family members are shown before the Virgin and Child in the context of a patrician memorial altarpiece. Some decades after his father and uncles had commissioned the altarpiece in the Bernardo family chapel, Piero q. Gerolamo Bernardo would embrace the new ostentation to plant a self-aggrandizing tomb into a large swathe of the *controfacciata* of the Frari (fig. 7.08; Tullio Lombardo, 1524, *in situ*). In the last of his several wills, Piero audaciously prescribed a large donor portrait of himself before God the Father: 'I will that there be made and set above the sepulchre a most beautiful figure in marble of God the Father,... with [another figure in] my image kneeling... they [should be] made so stunning and beautiful that those of all the other Houses cannot but praise them...'.⁴⁹ By 1520 Piero could thus openly announce his intention to raise an ostentatious monument designed to promote himself and his House, that would be the envy of his social rivals.

As the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna* recalled the Diedo patriline, so saints depicted in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* similarly alluded to several generations of the Bernardos – Saints Francis and Sebastian in the *tondi*, namesakes of the commissioners' grandfather and one of their young male heirs, connoted the past and future of the Bernardo line – although here, patron saints of the Bernardo commissioners are absent, as are namesake saints of their female relatives (with possible exception of the Virgin in the case of Maria Bernardo). The familial allusions in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* may also be fruitfully compared to the Frari altarpieces made for the Pesaro family. The case of the Bellini triptych is particularly notable, because, according to its inscription, the chapel was actually endowed in memory of the Pesaro brothers' mother Franceschina Pesaro (née Tron) – although only the saints of

⁴⁸ See Humfrey (1993), pp. 106-7 and pp. 304-6.

⁴⁹ 'Voio sia fatte e messa di sopra la sepultura una bellissima figura i[n] malmoro dio padre co[n] la mia immagine inzenocioni... fac[en]dole tanto aparisente e belle che Alorio atuti caxe verame[n]te le debinno laudare..' Piero q. Gerolamo Bernardo, will of 1520. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 506, no. 565.

Piero also wrote wills in 1510 and 1515 which similarly requested the donor portrait before God the Father, cited by Markham-Schulz (2001).

the brothers and their father appear.⁵⁰ Of course, female donors and onomastic saints are also absent from the triumphalist *Pesaro Altarpiece* by Titian, where the engaging portrait of a young boy manifestly asserts the future of the dynasty – analogous to the metaphorical significance of the St Sebastian *tondo* of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*.

The lack of female namesake-saints in these altarpieces may be explained by the ambivalent female position in relation to the patriline. The will of Elena Bernardo (wife of Antonio q. Andrea), like those of several Bernardo women, exemplifies how patrician women negotiated between their natal and marital families, selecting burial sites according to a variety of familial ties – according to what Chojnacki describes as the ‘distinctive female social orientation, personally fashioned... which cut across the patrilineal structure promoted by the institutional framework and the strategies of heads of families’.⁵¹ Elena vacillated between burial in Campo San Pietro, alongside her father, or instead in the Bernardo chapel: ‘[I will that]... my body be buried without any pomp at all, and with only the chapter of our parish [church] present... in the chapel of the House of Bernardo, or instead in Campo S Pietro beside my father, and that it be dressed in the habit of the third order of St Francis.’⁵²

To borrow from Binski’s exploration of the meaning and purpose of the medieval tomb, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* ‘...in engendering memory and prayer, is thus in the first instance ‘about’ the soul and its future, and it addresses the viewer with that in mind.’⁵³ It is not known whether all four brothers were indeed buried in the family chapel, and it is only the retrospective inscription on the floor tomb which links the saints of the altarpiece with the interments. By now the living memory of the brothers must have been all but extinguished and, in any case, the inscription cites only Andrea of the four. Thus, in the first instance the altarpiece alone commemorated the Bernardo brothers,

⁵⁰ See Goffen (1986), pp. 34-37.

⁵¹ Chojnacki (2000), p. 5.

A significant case is that of Cecilia, daughter of Maria and Gerolamo q. Andrea, who wrote her will in 1528. It seems she and her husband planned to install a tomb at Santa Maria dei Servi. In the event that tomb was not complete at her death, Cecilia would be buried, not in the Bernardo chapel at the Frari where many of her male relatives would be buried, including her father and her brothers Sebastiano and Piero, but instead Cecilia wished to follow her mother to San Sebastiano: ‘..El corpo mio voio sia sepulto ne la Giesa di Servi di Venetia se sara fata la nostra archa, Et si sa non fosse fatta volio esser sepulta a. S. Sebastian per mezo el Sacramento apreso mia madre...’ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1216, III.

⁵² ‘el mio corpo sia sepelido senza alguna pompa et con solo el capitolo de la contrada ...sia sepelida ala capella da cha Bernardo, si veramente a campo S Piero apreso mio padre, et sia vestida del abito del terza ordine de S Francesco’. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 86.

⁵³ Binski (1996), p. 149.

and that commemoration was therefore essentially an undisclosed or private matter for their descendents and the friars they employed to perform commemorative masses. In its commemorative purpose, in depicting the name-sake saints of various members of the family, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* was also similar to the *St Augustine Polyptych*, itself rendered meaningful as a public memorial by the addition of an inscription on the Dolfin floor tomb in 1539.

In the *tondi* of the predella, St Francis displays the *stigmata*, appropriately in imitation of Christ, the saint's wounds echoing those of Christ in the top panel of the work; whilst St Sebastian – unlike St Sebastian in the *St Ambrose Polyptych* – is naked in the usual renaissance fashion, pierced by arrows. It was suggested above that Saint Francis commemorated Francesco Bernardo, the commissioners' grandfather, whilst Sebastian represented the youngest generation, but it is likely that these saints were invested with other significances. Saint Francis may allude to Franciscan piety, in deference to the work's location in this important Franciscan basilica; it is clear that a number of the Bernardo family bore a certain allegiance to the various mendicant orders, including Maria Bernardo who desired to be buried in the habits of both the Franciscans and the Dominicans.⁵⁴ And St Sebastian could have been included as a plague prophylactic or votive, as the recent fierce pandemic of 1478 had coincided with the Bernardos' appropriation of the chapel.

The commemorative elements of the iconography, appearing in the predella and side panels, frame its paramount Christological and Marian 'theological' components, which comprise its central axis. The Man of Sorrows may be understood in terms of the funerary and Eucharistic functions of the chapel, where the Office of the Dead focussed on the Passion, and the primary sources show that many funerals and countless masses for the souls of the Bernardo family were performed at the chapel's altar. But the iconography was also consonant with the act of dying itself, where ideally an image of Christ on the cross might be set before a dying person and the Passion read aloud, to invite the dying Christian to identify with Christ's suffering.⁵⁵ Although the sleeping infant would have served as an appropriate premonition of the tomb, as in the 1464

⁵⁴ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 956, no. 480.

⁵⁵ It was recorded in the statutes of a Florentine hospital that an image of Christ on the cross was set before the dying patient and Christ's Passion, the Creed and other religious texts were read aloud. Henderson (2001), p. 216; see also Binski (1996), p. 53.

Polyptych of the Madonna, the contrast between the lively, plump infant and the cadaverous Man of Sorrows of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* serves to highlight the central paradox of the Christian faith, which posits the attainment of everlasting life through physical death. To emphasise his humanity, Christ is depicted naked at both extremities of life, recalling the verse from Job: '...Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away...' (Job 1: 21, Douay-Rheims). The allusion to the Book of Job is apposite, as this scripture was extensively cited in funerary rites of the period.⁵⁶

Christ's life and death are presented for the viewer's meditation; through the process of identification with Christ and his redemptive body, the subject of the altarpiece may become more generally the Christian life, death and resurrection. Christ's serene face and bleeding wounds were surely contrived to elicit a sorrowful and empathetic response from the worshipper, but the blood and wound may also be read as Eucharistic – this Christ-type was indeed traditionally employed on Eucharist tabernacles.⁵⁷ Egg-and-dart moulding appears on the upper frieze of the frame; with its insistent rhythmic symbolism of the life-and-death cycle it is an highly appropriate Classical motif for an altarpiece situated in a funerary chapel, depicting the themes of bodily death and, simultaneously, anticipating Christian redemption and resurrection.

The iconic Virgin was also an apposite subject for a funerary chapel (fig. 7.09). As mediatrix for human souls, she was regularly supplicated in Venetian wills and, of course, often depicted on funerary monuments. Although her gaze is modestly downcast, the infant on her lap extends his chubby hands as if to receive a suppliant. But the central image of the Virgin also coincided with the dedication of the church, properly Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, and the Bernardo altar numbered amongst the eight or so there dedicated to various Marian feasts. As to the specific dedication of the altar in the Bernardo chapel, Humfrey has shown that at some date prior to 1581 the altar was dedicated to the Visitation, although he noted that the altarpiece programme does not refer specifically to that and acknowledged many altar dedications changed in

⁵⁶ Binski (1996), pp. 53-54.

⁵⁷ A similar image is employed on the fictive tabernacle in the base of the frame of Titian's *Assunta* (1515-18, High Altar, Frari), Goffen (1986), p. 86. For examples of fifteenth-century tabernacles depicting the dead Christ, Wolters (1976), I, p. 276; II, figs. 777-781.

the later sixteenth century.⁵⁸ As we have seen, in his 1543 will Sebastiano Bernardo mentioned ‘the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady which is celebrated in our chapel’, which indicates the altar was dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin at an earlier date.⁵⁹ Again, however, the iconography of the altarpiece does not refer to that feast, and the above-cited record of indulgences granted in 1500 simply calls it ‘The chapel of the Blessed Virgin’ – evidence that the altar was in the first instance dedicated simply to the ‘Blessed Virgin’.⁶⁰

Bartolomeo dispensed with the musical angels depicted in the *St Mark Triptych* (fig. 3.13) and the foreground of the central panel of the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* is more sober than that work. A *trompe l’oeil* potted shrub, perhaps myrtle for eternal love, occupies the space before the throne, visually linking the altarpiece to the altar as the vase appears to advance from the picture plane. Of course, this is a familiar device, employed by Hugo Van der Goes in the *Portinari Triptych* (c. 1475-76, Uffizi, Florence) and also in *cinquecento* Venetian altarpieces such as Tintoretto’s *Assumption of the Virgin* (1554-55, Gesuiti, Venice).

The Formal Qualities of the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece*

It is reasonable to suppose the 1474 *St Mark Triptych* in the Corner chapel at the Frari commended Bartolomeo’s skills to the Bernardo family.⁶¹ But given their considerable formal differences, it is evident the *St Mark Triptych* did not provide a model for the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* and we can suppose the Bernardo commissioners desired their altarpiece be sufficiently distinguished from the earlier one made for a rival clan. Instead, the form and programme of the *Ca’ Bernardo Altarpiece* resemble those of the *Bragora Altarpiece* made four years earlier, around the time the Bernardos assumed the *juspatronatus* of their chapel. The format of the two works is so similar it seems likely the Bernardo family stipulated their altarpiece be designed along the lines of the 1478 *Bragora Altarpiece* – it was, after all, common practice to cite existing works as

⁵⁸ Humfrey used the 1581 apostolic visit as the principal source for dedications. Humfrey (1993), p. 62; p. 64; pp. 69-70.

⁵⁹ ‘la festa de la presentation de nostra dona si fa in la nostra capella’. ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 677, no. 887. Humfrey (1993) p. 62, observed: ‘...since most [altar] dedications corresponded to liturgical feasts in the church’s calendar, it was the norm to mark the titular feast with a special annual celebration’.

⁶⁰ ‘la Capella della Beata Vergine’, ASV, Frari, b. 1, II, no. 50.

⁶¹ No evidence has been found that members of the Bernardo family were enrolled in the Scuola Grande di San Marco at the time the altarpiece was commissioned. ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 4.

exempla in artists' contracts.⁶² Moreover, it is almost certain that the same frame-maker, probably Jacopo da Faenza, was employed on both altarpieces (see chapter 5).⁶³ The principal differences between the *Bragora* and *Bernardo* altarpieces are the substitution of the gold background in the former for a more naturalistic daylight blue, and the significantly larger scale of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, necessitated by the impressive physical space of the family chapel.

The clear composition and material modesty of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, by contrast to the exuberant ornament in the *St Mark Triptych* and the gold of the altarpieces made for export to the Bergamo area, suggest that the erudite and widely-travelled Bernardos subscribed to the Albertian aesthetic of restraint, where 'the painter's skilled hand... not the expensive pigments on his palette or the gold leaf on his shelves, defined his achievement' and where excessive employment of gold and busy detail were to be eschewed in favour of 'clarity, order and decorum'.⁶⁴ As we have seen, Antonio Bernardo was a university professor in Padua, and it is quite possible he had come across Alberti's treatise there; whilst the intellectual pursuits of Antonio's brother Lorenzo, are attested by their father Andrea's bequest to him of volumes on history, law and rhetoric.⁶⁵ The Bernardo family might also have selected the classicising style in order to further distinguish their altarpiece from that in the Corner chapel by the same master.

The *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* confutes the view that in mature years Bartolomeo was unable to respond to new trends. Whilst Goffen observed the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* belonged to the new world of the renaissance, this is not generally acknowledged by critics whose narrative of a retrogressive artist in decline it disrupts.⁶⁶ Following the influential Roberto Longhi, Gentili recently affirmed that Bartolomeo suffered a stylistic crisis in his last decade: 'the rapid decline of the Mantegna model, coupled with the no less rapid rise of Bellini's innovations, must have taken Vivarini by surprise, leaving him without the mental energy or stimuli to undertake another complicated process of change and adaptation.'⁶⁷ Ignoring the altarpiece's forward-

⁶² See, for example, Humfrey (2001), p. 44.

⁶³ See below.

⁶⁴ See Grafton (2001), p. 115 and Cole (1995), p. 27.

⁶⁵ 'I libri de istorie e de autoctorj et retorica, sia de Lorenzo mio fiol...' ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 823, no. 8.

⁶⁶ Goffen (1986a), pp. 46–47.

⁶⁷ Gentili (1997), p. 264.

looking qualities, Gentili insinuated that Bartolomeo's attainment of the prestigious Bernardo commission was due to the 'conservative' character of his Venetian clientele. Whilst in its multi-panelled format the altarpiece was indeed traditional, the painted panels and the decoration on the frame are executed in a fully articulated renaissance manner. Further, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* exemplifies the artist's evolution from the Mantegnesque vocabulary of his earlier period to a pared-down monumental figure style of the high renaissance, as do the *Saints Barbara* and *Mary Magdalene* of 1490.

That said, there are problems with the execution of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*; in particular, the facial description lacks the subtlety of saints' physiognomies in earlier works, which are distinguished by their character and formal beauty. One may imagine the exquisitely-drawn, pathetic face of St Lawrence of the 1473 *St Augustine Polyptych* (fig. 2.16) elicited an emotional response from the viewer, and St Peter of the 1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych* is characterised at once as strong, though contemplative. By contrast, Peter's physiognomy in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* appears vacant rather than meditative (fig. 7.10), and there is insufficient differentiation between Saints Peter and Nicholas; pom-pom quiffs sit on their foreheads, a motif adopted even for the Christ child, which lends the work an unfortunate comic aspect. However, St Paul, with swarthy complexion, heavy brows and stern expression is more strongly characterised and, although the Virgin's physiognomy is less finely delineated than some of Bartolomeo's earlier Madonnas, her smooth ovoid face is well executed. Her serenity sets the contemplative mood of the whole altarpiece, an atmosphere fitting to its funerary function.

However, the Man of Sorrows is superbly handled, and here Bartolomeo demonstrated his facility in anatomical description, both accurate and refined (quite distinct from the clumsy anatomical exaggerations in contemporary altarpieces made largely by the studio, such as the knobbly-kneed St Christopher of the *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych*). In depicting the shroud draped over the stone ledge of the sepulchre, Bartolomeo showed off his skill in *trompe l'oeil* effects. As with several of his most effectively drawn figures, for the Man of Sorrows Bartolomeo drew upon a contemporary work of sculpture, this time his model was Pietro Lombardo's relief of the same subject in the lunette of the tomb of Doge Pasquale Malipiero (d. 1462), (figs. 7.11-7.12). The tomb would have been very familiar to the artist, for it was probably completed a few years

prior to Bartolomeo's *Saint Augustine Polyptych* which was installed near the tomb at SS Giovanni e Paolo.

Though divided into various panels, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* falls essentially into the *sacra conversazione* genre. The space in the three panels is continuous, as indicated by the unbroken line of the marble step on which the saints are depicted, and here Bartolomeo moved closer to the fictive architectural spaces beyond the frame described in *sacre conversazioni* associated with Giovanni Bellini most precociously in the *St Catherine Altarpiece* (fig. 2.19; ex-SS Giovanni e Paolo, destroyed), and later, Alvise Vivarini and Cima da Conegliano. That said, as Goffen has observed, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* is more a fictive window than an architectonic space;⁶⁸ the Christ figure particularly seems to be portrayed as though through an aperture, recalling numerous contemporary Venetian portraits where the sitter is positioned behind a fictive ledge or, indeed, the small Madonna pictures which Bartolomeo made using this very device (fig. 0.26).

Although Bartolomeo was not especially engaged with the challenge of spatial description, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* is nevertheless spatially and compositionally sophisticated, its geometrical composition formed of horizontals (the base and frieze of the frame; the step; the throne's plinth; the sepulchre; the cross) and verticals (the frame's pilasters and the figures) creating the impression of monumental solidity. The design of the central panel is based on a three-dimensional pyramid, formed by the stone plinth, the body of the enthroned Virgin, reaching its apex in the crown of the throne. Appositely, the Virgin's face is the fulcrum of the composition, the top of her head marking its exact centre. The space described is less shallow than in Bartolomeo's earlier works and the perspective is crisp and convincing. A sense of spatial recession is created by the backdrop of daylight sky, touched by pinkish-grey clouds and graduated in intensity and colour from bottom to top. This background also illustrates how Bartolomeo engaged with recent developments; Hills has explained how the addition of white to blue in order to create sky-blues represented a significant shift from medieval to modern colour in the later fifteenth century.⁶⁹ This feature of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* is unique to Bartolomeo's (extant) Venetian altarpieces, although as early as 1465 with the *Naples Altarpiece* he had adopted a graduated light-to-dark

⁶⁸ Goffen (1986a), p. 47.

⁶⁹ The examples actually cited in Hills (1999), p. 134, are by Giovanni Bellini.

sky (fig. 7.13). The daylight sky of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* contrasts with the crepuscular background of the *St Mark Triptych* which serves to push the saints towards the picture plane, resulting in a more shallow and cramped composition. It is fair to say that with the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* Bartolomeo overcame the problem identified by Hills in the *Naples Altarpiece*, which exhibits '...an essentially local conception of the modelling of the figures as so many separate areas of relief. What is missing in Bartolomeo's pursuit of Paduan-inspired modernity is a feel for the unifying power of light'.⁷⁰ Despite its renaissance motifs and precocious format, this fragmented description of light and colour – exacerbated by fussy details and frilly delineation – indeed renders the *Naples Altarpiece* close in sensibility to International Gothic; by contrast, the pared detail and unified illumination of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* makes for a more convincingly renaissance image.

Through modelling and the consistent fall of shadows, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* is implicitly illuminated from above-left. For aesthetic reasons, the implied light source of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* does not respect the strongest source of natural light – the tall apsidal windows behind the altarpiece. In respecting this, Bartolomeo would have had to throw shadows outwards, towards the viewer. The artist was evidently aware of the difficult ambient lighting of the east end of the church and strategically adopted vivid palettes in both Frari altarpieces, to render them legible against the intense backlight, which could obliterate the view of the altarpiece. (Indeed, the lower portion of the apsidal windows was blocked in at an unknown date, perhaps to improve the visibility of the altar.) From the front, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* was illuminated mainly by candlelight and an oil lamp – a cavity in the keystone of the apse vault shows where the lamp was suspended. The luminescent colours of the saints' robes, set off by the cool grey-white of the marble plinth and the sky-blue background, would have been rendered legible and mobile under flickering candlelight, but not garish as they may seem under the glare of modern illumination. The remarkably high colour of the Frari altarpieces was thus not merely symptomatic of the artist's Murano background as has been suggested, but a practical solution to tricky lighting conditions.

The frame contributes significantly to the impression of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* as a more up-to-date work, notably through the employment of fashionable Lombardesque

⁷⁰ Hills (1999), p. 98.

detailing and the round arches of the apertures. In contrast with the stylistically heterogeneous *St Mark Triptych*, where a flamboyant gothic frame confines painted panels replete with renaissance motifs, here panels and frame are integrated in style, motif and iconography. Already employed in the *St Ambrose* and *Bragora* altarpieces, the round arches recall the central aperture of the Frari's newly completed choir-screen which frames the view of the high altar (Pietro Lombardo and shop, 1475). Motifs in the painted panels are echoed in the frame's decorative reliefs: the top of the Virgin's throne repeats the moulded arch over the Man of Sorrows; variations on the vase motif appear in the central panel and the reliefs, in turn recalling similar motifs on the pilasters of the Lombardo choir-screen. As noted above, the iconography of the frame expands that of the painted panels, demonstrating that it was key to the conception of the whole work. Given that the frame was probably the fruit of Bartolomeo's ongoing collaboration with Jacopo da Faenza, it is likely the painter was in some way responsible for the engagement of the carver, as was certainly the case with the 1484 *Death of the Virgin*.⁷¹ As the employer of the woodcarver, Bartolomeo may have had a greater say in the design of the frame, which in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* resulted in a close correspondence of frame and painted panels.

§

This Chapter has aimed to reconstruct as far as possible the commissioning circumstances of the *Ca' Bernardo* altarpiece, as well as to consider its function in the context of the Bernardo family chapel. The examination of family documents together with the iconographic programme of the altarpiece has shed new light on the identities of the various commissioners of the altarpiece, its commemorative function, and the countless rites, ceremonies and festivities for which it served as the focus. The Bernardo family emerges as a wealthy, erudite and politically successful clan and testaments show that various family members commissioned other ecclesiastical or memorial artworks, a subject which merits further study in its own right. Despite the social mores which in the later fifteenth century still inhibited overt self-aggrandisement and the inclusion of family portraits in altarpieces, the chapel also served to assert the family's success and status which appears to have reached its apogee at the time the family chapel was acquired.

⁷¹ For the *Dormition*, Sambin (1964), p. 41, and chapter 5, the concluding chapter and appendix 8 here.

Given their prominence, wealth and sophistication, we can be sure the Bernardo family selected an artist with a first-class reputation to produce their altarpiece. It is indicative of Bartolomeo's stature that he was selected, and it is an indication of his successful and well-received execution of the commission that the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* was perhaps cited as a model for the altarpiece commissioned by the Pesaro family from Giovanni Bellini six years later. Analysis of the formal qualities of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* demonstrate that when he worked for sophisticated clientele, Bartolomeo Vivarini engaged with formal developments even at this later stage in his career, despite the traditional historiography which asserts the contrary. Perhaps the most fully articulated Venetian renaissance altarpiece by Bartolomeo, the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* was designed to suit the humanist taste of its erudite patrons; and Bartolomeo's use of a relief by Pietro Lombardo as his model for the Man of Sorrows panel demonstrates his engagement with the most up-to-date renaissance models, as well as the way he turned to contemporary sculpture for formal inspiration perhaps more readily than to contemporary painting – indeed, his most visually-successful works were conceived as *trompe l'oeil* reliefs. The *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* is distinguished in its superior form and quality from Bartolomeo's old-fashioned late export works which represent the lion's share of his output in the 1480s and are inevitably cited in evidence of the artist's 'decline'. The significance and form of the late works will be briefly reconsidered in the concluding chapter which follows.

Taking Bartolomeo's patrician altarpieces as a group, they can be said to exemplify the ways in which wealthy and prominent commissioners negotiated the decorum of modesty, while they simultaneously satisfied a desire for a splendid object which honourably fulfilled the commemorative and devotional functions of a funerary chapel. In concert with other elements in a chapel, the name-saints in an altarpiece were used to 'represent' significant family members and to indicate or enhance the dynastic credentials of the patrician clan, a matter of increasing import in renaissance Venice. The altarpiece programmes examined here were also seen to function in subtly different ways, according to the familial and social circumstances of the donors: saints in the Diedo's *Polyptych of the Madonna* represented important figures in the donor's male line in the main panels, including the patron saint of the donor himself and, in the absence of a direct heir, his eldest nephew, whilst significant female kin were alluded to by female namesake-saints in marginal panels. Whereas the commanding image of St

Mark proclaimed the ancient Corner family's close ties with the State, the Saints John in the *St Mark Altarpiece*, recalled Piero Corner's father, whose own filial dutifulness was commemorated in the cenotaph inscription. The paternal line was also evoked through male saints arrayed in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, where the dynastic allusions of the altarpiece would be suggested through names inscribed decades later on the tomb before it, the historicized date perhaps intended to enhance the relatively new Bernardo family's venerability. Similarly, the floor-tomb before the *St Augustine Polyptych*, which was located very prominently near the main entrance of SS Giovanni e Paolo, was also inscribed many years after the installation of the altarpiece – again the Christian names in the inscription rendered the familial associations of saints depicted in the altarpiece meaningful to any future beholder. Analogous to the way the Bernardos had used an inscription to manufacture their historical associations with the chapel, the inscription on the Dolfen tomb served to 'legitimise' Domenico Dolfen's illegitimate male offspring – an intention which should be understood in the context of a society increasingly concerned to maintain the 'purity' of its aristocratic bloodlines, and which had developed tools – registers of legitimate patrician marriages and births – in order to exclude men such as Marco and Giovanni Dolfen from State affairs, usually the birthright of their estate.⁷²

The extent to which the religious order at the host church may have impinged on the iconographic programmes of the patrician altarpieces was also considered in the case-studies; it may be noted that where there was a high degree of sympathy between the altarpiece commissioner and the incumbent order – documented in the cases of the 1464 *Madonna* and 1473 *St Augustine* polyptychs – the altarpiece programmes reflect the devotional interests of the respective orders, indicating the iconographic programmes of these works were the product of dialogue between the altarpiece commissioner and a representative of the host church. In contrast, the *St Mark Altarpiece* in the Corner chapel exhibits no attributes which seem particularly Franciscan nor relevant to the dedication of the Frari – perhaps symptomatic of the commissioner's antipathy to the location of the chapel at the Franciscan conventual church; but it is also notable that Piero Corner was apparently free to choose the programme of his altarpiece without undue interference on the part of the Friars. Finally, the iconography of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* reflects the harmonious

⁷² See Grubb (1994), pp. 376-78, on the anxiety to maintain pure blood-lines and the use of official records from the early fifteenth century to this end.

relations which existed between the commissioning family and the friary – the central subject of their altarpiece alludes to the dedication of the Frari church to the Virgin, and the Franciscan Order is acknowledged by the inclusion of St Francis in a roundel.

Afterword and Conclusion

*'...magister Bartholomeus promisit...pulcherrime et ornatissime ac laudabiliter
construere sive construi facere de lignamine...unam palam ab altari...cum
immaginibus beatissime virginis Marie et cum XII apostolorum et eterno Creatore ...'*¹

Bartolomeo Vivarini's achievements have been obscured by the export works which emerged from the studio in his final decade. To be sure, most scholars do acknowledge the late works were mainly studio pieces, although critics have usually accounted for Bartolomeo's prolific export production by his having fallen out of favour at home because of the pre-eminence of Giovanni Bellini, and cite his late works as damning evidence of Bartolomeo's retrogressive tendencies. Before closing, it is therefore necessary to briefly review the final decade, to ask why Bartolomeo's hand is seen more rarely, and consider whether his works indeed went out of fashion in 1480s Venice; in order to do this, the biography and output of the period 1482-91 will be briefly reviewed, with particular attention paid to the important contract of the 1484 *Dormition of the Virgin* (fig. 8.01), published by Sambin, to illuminate the artist's working methods and organisation of the workshop in the 1480s (appendix 9).²

Bartolomeo Vivarini and his *Bottega* after 1482

It seems that Bartolomeo adopted a largely managerial role in his last decade. He was present with the monks at the agreement of the *Dormition* contract at the charterhouse near Padua, which proves that well into the 1480s he managed the *bottega*'s business affairs and handled sales negotiations in person. But the visual evidence shows that, in the same period, he increasingly removed himself from the actual process of painting – of course, the sheer number of altarpieces leaving the *bottega* in the 1480s necessitated his reliance on assistants (see appendix 2); it is notable that guild legislation did permit

¹ Contract for the *Dormition of the Virgin*. Sambin (1964), p. 41, also appendix 9 here.

² Sambin published the *Dormition* contract in 1964 with the scope of confirming the provenance of the 1475 *Lussingrande Altarpiece* and the date of the *Dormition* itself, the inscription of which had been tampered with.

a qualified master to 'retire to the more passive role of managing the business'.³ This semi-retirement was probably a matter of personal convenience, for his 1484 journey to Padua indicates that Bartolomeo was not infirm, and the late autograph panels of Saints *Barbara* and *Magdalene* (figs. 8.09-8.10; 1490, Accademia, Venice) demonstrate that he had suffered no impairment to his vision or dexterity. That he was able to afford the luxury of relying on assistants is further evidence that Bartolomeo's business continued to prosper.

The 1484 contract terms show how Bartolomeo's clients defined the form, dimensions, composition and iconography of the *Dormition*, and how they prescribed the features of the frame, which would be surmounted by a carved figure of St Michael, almost as closely as the subject of the painted panel. As Humfrey has noted, the contract also proves that artists such as Bartolomeo were, at least sometimes, responsible for the selection and employment of the frame-maker.⁴ As he subcontracted the frame-maker, Bartolomeo was possibly in a position to design the frame himself, or at least contribute to its design – within, of course, the contract stipulations. The altarpiece was to follow the form and dimensions of the so-called *Lussingrande Altarpiece* (fig. 0.14) which Bartolomeo had made for the monastery a decade previously and to which the new work would form a sort of pendant. The monks stipulated the *Dormition* be made in Venice and, once properly completed with all its necessary accoutrements, it would be despatched to the charterhouse within eight months.⁵

The contract did not actually record the subject as the 'dormition of the Virgin', but rather describes the scene as follows:

... the image of the most Blessed Virgin Mary with the twelve apostles, and the Eternal Creator enthroned with angels all around [Him], and with, to one side, the image of Saint Lawrence, as the altar on which this *pala* will be placed is dedicated in honour of St Lawrence, and with the image of St Stephen on the other, opposite, side.⁶

³ J. Shaw (n.d.), p.3.

⁴ Humfrey (1986b), p.73.

⁵ On the despatch of altarpieces for export see Humfrey (1986b), pp.75 ff and *idem.* (1994) pp.18-19.

⁶ 'cum imaginibus beatissime virginis Marie et cum XII apostolorum [sic] et eterno Creatore in trono cum angelis circumcirca et ab uno latere cum immagine Sancti Laurentii, quai altare super quo collocabitur ipsa pala est dedicatum in honorem Sancti Laurentii, et cum immagine Sancti Stefani ad alio latere ex opposite.' Sambin (1964), p. 41; appendix 9 here.

The omission of the subject title implies Bartolomeo and the monks discussed the subject before committing the essential ingredients to paper, so the contract was merely the legal outcome of informal discussion, as one might expect. Certain scholars have denigrated Bartolomeo for sometimes employing antiquated iconographies, but the 1484 contract demonstrates that these clients stipulated the old-fashioned iconography of the Dormition, instead of the Assumption, as well as the anachronistic insertion of Saints Lorenzo and Stephen.

It is notable how Bartolomeo carefully observed the contract terms, but he also drew closely upon the large mosaic of the *Dormition* in the so-called Mascoli chapel at St Mark's basilica (fig. 8.02; attrib. Andrea del Castagno). As noted in chapter 4 above, the artist had used the Visitation from the mosaics as a source for the Meeting of Anna and Joachim of his 1474 *Misericordia Triptych*. When the Mascoli mosaics were completed in c. 1451 they must have profoundly impressed the young Venetian, for certain scenes were articulated in a style consonant with that which had engaged him during his formative years in Padua. (Indeed, Berenson even attributed the design of the Mascoli *Dormition* to Bartolomeo.⁷) The moribund Virgin of the altarpiece so resembles her counterpart in the mosaic that it appears Bartolomeo had made drawings after it: in both images the elderly Virgin is extended left-to-right on a bier, her head propped on a pillow, the pallid face shown in three-quarter profile, with hollow cheeks, slightly cleft chin and pronounced eye sockets, her hands crossed over her waist, and her body shrouded. However, Bartolomeo changed the arrangement of the apostles and substituted a rugged landscape for the imposing architectural background of the mosaics, presumably to afford uniformity with the earlier 'pendant' altarpiece. The figure of Christ in a *mandorla* receiving the Virgin's soul is very similar to the mosaic version, although in the altarpiece the *angioletti* are more evenly distributed 'all around' the *mandorla* – a detail which exemplifies Bartolomeo's attentive observation of his commissioners' instructions.

Unlike many of the export altarpieces, the *Dormition* includes a wealth of detail, which probably reflects the prestigious client and the relatively local destination of the

⁷ Berenson (1957), I, p. 203.

altarpiece.⁸ Bartolomeo himself probably designed the *Dormition*, which has a very strong symmetrical composition based on ellipses set on different planes and at different angles, calculated to harmonise with the composition of its *sacra conversazione* pendant. But the *Dormition* was largely painted by the assistant whose distinctive style first appeared in the 1475 work (which allowed for further correspondence between the two), characterised by idiosyncratically flat physiognomies with retroussé noses, small bulbous chins and widely set, prominent cheekbones. This hand was also responsible for the Ascension panel in the 1485 *Arbe Polyptych* (fig. 6.11), despatched in 1485 to the eponymous Dalmatian island.

Although Bartolomeo also sent a couple of altarpieces to southern Italy in the 1480s, it was the Bergamo region in the north, under Venetian rule since 1427, that became his most profitable market in the 1480s, and where he sent around nine altarpieces.⁹ Although there are no surviving contracts for Bartolomeo's Bergamask altarpieces, the 'Venetiis' of the inscriptions verifies they were made in Venice for export, and there is some evidence to indicate they were ordered from the artist by Bergamask expatriates living in Venice, who commissioned them for their impoverished home parishes; according to a seventeenth-century tradition, this had been the arrangement for Bartolomeo's *Scanzo Polyptych* (fig. 8.03; 1488, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo).¹⁰ As Rossi noted, Bartolomeo made most of his Bergamask altarpieces for a limited geographical area around the Seriano valley, where he must have enjoyed a virtual monopoly, which had perhaps arisen through Bergamask émigrés making copy-cat orders.¹¹ The Bergamask altarpieces are formally similar – invariably polyptychs with gold backgrounds – a type virtually outmoded in Venice, but evidently to the taste of the rural villagers. With regard to practical considerations, a traditional polyptych was

⁸ The fee of 50 ducats compares well to the 24 ducats he received from Domenico Diedo at the start of his independent career (chapter 1 here). For comparison with prices of other fifteenth-century Venetian altarpieces, see Humfrey (1986b), p. 80.

⁹ Rossi (1994), pp. 103–4, listed nine polyptychs made for the Bergamask provinces. See appendix 2. With the exception of the *Almenno Altarpiece* and the *Rosary Triptych*, these were made for the Seriana valley area.

¹⁰ Donato Calvi, c. 1670, recorded: 'Vi è un'ancona all'altare della Madonna, detta Venetia perché la fecero fare alcuni di Scanzo abitanti nella sudetta città, senza saper il pittore, che l'ha formata che fu del 1450 [sic]...' Calvi had been informed by the parish priest of Scanzo. Cited Rossi (1994), p. 127, cat. 6. Humfrey (1994), pp. 17–18, observed a similar arrangement was documented in the case of a polyptych by Lattanzio da Rimini (1499–1501, San Martino, Piazza Brembana).

¹¹ Rossi (1994) pp. 104–5.

more transportable than the unified *pala*, for the multi-panelled altarpieces could be carried as separate components and reassembled on site.¹²

Visual evidence shows that Bartolomeo restricted the personal attention he gave to the export works which bore his name, perhaps contributing to focal areas, such as the faces of saints appearing in central panels. The autograph physiognomies had changed from earlier models consonant with the artist's late monumental figure style, and tend to be rounder, less gaunt; for example, the face of the St James in the eponymous polyptych (figs. 8.04-8.05; 1490, Getty Museum, California) has a similar quality to the earlier autograph Bassano *Redeemer Enthroned* (fig. 6.06), although St James' face is fleshier and more mature, it has a certain strength of character, indicative of the master's hand. But the late works exhibit problems of quality control – the different studio hands were not readily synthesised with that of their master, and the competence gap sometimes resulted in erratic handling within a given altarpiece. For instance, by contrast with St James, the face of St Peter in the Getty altarpiece is vacant and misshapen, for the assistant was incompetent in characterisation and in drawing three-quarter profiles; this hand is also seen, for example, in Saints Peter and Bernardine in the *Andria Altarpiece* (fig. 8.06; 1483, Museo Provinciale, Bari). The export works also include many instances of very awkwardly-drawn hands, for example those of Saints Andrew and Scolastica of the 1485 *Arbe Polyptych*.

Even if autograph figures are not anatomically perfect, they are expressive and convincing, as exemplified by the Virgin and Child which formed the central section of the 1485 *Almenno Altarpiece* (fig. 8.07; S. Bartolomeo, Almenno San Bartolomeo, Bergamo).¹³ Here the Virgin's body is abstracted so as to become architectural, she is seated on an austere classicising throne, her robust form almost pyramidal, her wide lap echoing the form of a throne, perhaps to evoke her as the *sedes sapientes*, and she is foreshortened in the lower body to take account of a spectator's low viewpoint. The autograph qualities of the Virgin may be explained not only by her centrality in the altarpiece, but also because this was perhaps the first altarpiece Bartolomeo made for the Bergamo area. By contrast, assistants unsuccessfully attempted to imitate the spare monumentality and anatomical abstraction of the master's late style, showing lack of

¹² On the villagers' taste, Rossi (1994), p.105; the transportability of the polyptych is noted by Humfrey (1994), p. 18.

¹³ Rossi (1994), pp.125-26, cat. 2: Pallucchini (1962), p.128, cat. 204 and 207.

anatomical comprehension in describing figures which were merely broad and disjointed. For instance, the St Peter in the *Andria Altarpiece* is a poor re-working of the same saint in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* of the previous year – in the *Andria Altarpiece* St Peter's left hip is widely dislocated, and the left foot emerges at an incorrect angle from the leg; similarly, St John the Evangelist in the *St James Polyptych* has an improbably wide-set right hip. In other works with semi-naked figures, bones and sinews are exaggerated to give a series of abstracted, sinuous lines which do not add up to a coherent body; typical of this hand are the bulging walnut-like knees and knotty calves of the Baptist and St Sebastian of the *St Martin Triptych* (fig. 8.08; 1491, Accademia Carrara, Bergamo). As for models, the shop clearly relied on earlier cartoons, sometimes simplified – as noted in chapter 6, the St Roch figure in the *Melzi d'Eril Altarpiece* was taken from the central figure in the *S. Eufemia St Roch Altarpiece*. The variant designs were pared down, as Humfrey has observed, in order to save time and labour for maximum productivity.¹⁴

§

Two late documents allow a little insight into the artist's way of life and work. The first, contracted on Murano in June 1489, records that a painter identified only as Bartolomeo employed a ten-year-old boy named Giovanni, son of a certain Domenico de Casali, as his assistant. The artist agreed to teach the boy the secrets of the painter's craft over a period of ten years, and in return would pay him ten gold ducats annually as well as feed, clothe and house him.¹⁵ If this document does relate to Bartolomeo Vivarini – which is not certain – it implies his intention to continue the studio's operation well into the future, notwithstanding his own partial retirement. Another document, dated 20 July 1490, identifies the artist unequivocally as 'magistri Bartholomei Vivarini pictoris de Muriano'. The reference indicates Bartolomeo had finally moved back to his birthplace of Murano – here it seems unlikely 'de Muriano' was intended merely as an epithet, for Bartolomeo's former parish of S. Maria Formosa is unmentioned – whereas Bartolomeo's son-in-law, also cited at the outset of the document, was identified by both his full name and place of habitation, according to the standard legal form.¹⁶ Thus, at some date between 1484, when he was certainly still

¹⁴ Humfrey (1994), p. 18.

¹⁵ Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 268, n.45; appendix 1 here.

¹⁶ Ludwig, (1905) p. 18, no. 12.

living in S Maria Formosa, and 1490, Bartolomeo had returned to live on the island of Murano, and must therefore have further withdrawn from the daily operation of the busy studio (assuming that had not relocated to the island). His semi-retirement may explain why Bartolomeo developed external markets in the 1480s at the expense of the local one, for which the artist evidently felt compelled to handle the commissions personally. Professional pride, as well as business acumen, may have led Bartolomeo to protect his standing at home – professional honour is an important theme of the respective *mariegole* of Venetian artists, craftsmen and tradesmen.

However, in 1490 a prestigious commission apparently coaxed Bartolomeo out of retirement, and resulted in the fine *Mary Magdalene* and *St. Barbara* (the latter inscribed BARTHOLOMEVS . VIVA . RINUS . DE MVRANO . PINXIT . 1490.; each 132 x 48 cm, Accademia, Venice; figs. 8.09-8.10).¹⁷ These panels are particularly significant in the oeuvre, for they disprove several persistent clichés about Bartolomeo's late period. Despite the historiographical trope that his old-fashioned works had lost their appeal in a market enraptured by the genius of Giovanni Bellini, these show that Bartolomeo could still attract local clients of the highest rank. For the *Barbara* and *Magdalene* were apparently made for an altar in S. Geminiano (demolished 1807), which was located on the most prestigious site in the city opposite the basilica in St Mark's Square, between the Procuratie Vecchie and Nuove.¹⁸ The parish church was the focus of an annual ducal procession and inevitably attracted the patronage of prominent public figures, particularly Procurators of St Mark's.¹⁹ Unfortunately, due to the rebuilding of the church from 1505, little is known about its fifteenth-century arrangement, contents and patronage, and there are many unanswered questions about the *Barbara* and *Magdalene* panels, but given the status and situation of the church, it seems likely that they were commissioned by a Procurator of St Mark's, or other distinguished member of the Venetian patriciate.²⁰ The panels also disprove the cliché of the artist's failing ability,

¹⁷ G. Nepi Sciré and F. Valcanover (1985), p.185, nos. 319 & 320.

¹⁸ Ridolfi (1999), p. 55, was the first to record the panels in S. Geminiano '[Bartolomeo] fece ancora due figure dalle parti del Crocefisso nella cappella di Sansovino in san Geminiano'.

¹⁹ Sansovino (1998), pp. 496-97, recorded several sixteenth-century monuments to Procurators of St Mark's in the rebuilt church of San Geminiano, and, given the location, it seems fair to suppose the church was a traditional burial place of the procurators. The extent to which it was patronised by the wealthy and prominent is indicated by Sansovino's comment that, despite its small size, the rebuilt S. Geminiano was probably the most ornate of the city's churches, *ibid.*, p.109.

²⁰ The panels were apparently designed to flank a three-dimensional object, for Bartolomeo's inscription was displaced from any (lost) central section to the St Barbara panel. Griffiths (1976), p.18, hypothesised the panels were made as shutters for a small organ. But it seems more likely that the central area was occupied by a sculpture, to form a mixed-media altarpiece; two of Bartolomeo's late altarpieces included

for the handling is superb, the figures are well drawn and modelled, and their physiognomies as pleasing as anything the artist produced in the 1470s – and rather better than the assisted saints of the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*. Moreover, the panels demonstrate how Bartolomeo remained attuned to renaissance developments in his late career, for the saints are modelled in the fuller forms that typified high renaissance sculpture and, in contrast with the fussy detailing of early-renaissance architecture in Venice, the classical niches which frame the figures also anticipate the Roman architectonic style of the sixteenth century.

The *St Martin Triptych* (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo) is the last painting and 'document' of Bartolomeo's career, it is inscribed: OPUS . FACTVM . VENETIIS / PER . BARTHOLOMEVM . VIVA . / RINVM.DE.MVRIANO . I . 491. and was probably made for the high altar of the parish church of S. Martino at Torre Boldone, near Bergamo. Although there are similarities of motif with earlier works, such as the barren, stratified landscape which recalls that in the altarpieces made for the Paduan charterhouse, there is little here to suggest the master's direct intervention, apart from certain aspects of the design.²¹ It is notable that Bartolomeo did not contribute to the central panel where the facial description is exceptionally poor. The most likely explanation for the altarpiece having been made almost entirely by assistants is that Bartolomeo was ailing. As there are no

a central sculptural section, the 1485 *Arbe Polyptych* and the *Alzano Sopra Polyptych* (date unknown) which included a polychrome wooden sculpture of the martyrdom of St Lawrence (lost). On these, Rossi (1994), p. 135, cat. 24, and appendix 2 here.

Aside from the Accademia panels, Bartolomeo may have made another altarpiece for S. Geminiano. Boschini (1674), S. Marco, p. 74, stated the *Saints Mary Magdalene* and *Barbara* were arranged either side of a Vivarinesque triptych, unmentioned in earlier sources: 'Vi sono nella Capella del Christo, che è dalla parti de Frezzaria, due figure, una per per parte dell'altare, cioè S Maria Maddalena, e S Barbara, di mano di Bortolameo (*sic*) Vivarino. Il Salvatore sedente nel mezo, e dalle parti S Marco Evangelista, e S. Saba Abbate della stessa maniera'. Given the *Redeemer Enthroned* at the centre of the triptych, it was presumably original to a chapel dedicated to Christ (of which there was certainly one so dedicated in the rebuilt church); the inclusion of St Mark was obviously a suitable subject in S. Geminiano with its links to the Procurators of St Mark's. Zorzi's (2001), p. 224, reading that the Barbara and Magdalene formed part of a pentaptych with the other painted panels recorded by Boschini is almost certainly mistaken. Although the text is slightly ambiguous, it seems clear that Boschini intended the triptych and the *Barbara* and *Magdalene* were separate works.

It is worth noting that the original provenance of Bartolomeo's *Redeemer Enthroned* (c. 1480?, Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa) remains mysterious. The *Redeemer* was left to the Bassano museum as part of the legacy of Mons. Jacopo Merlo in 1866. A Venetian provenance is suggested in the inscription which took the form Bartolomeo used for works made for the home market: F / B[AR]TH[OLOM] AE[US] [V]IVA[RINUS] [DE MURI]AN[O] [PINXI]T. (There are significant losses in the area of the inscription, which is now reduced to a few letters. Here reconstructed according to Magagnato and Passamani (1978), pp. 117-18, cat. 112.) As Pallucchini noted (1962), p. 123, cat. 176, the panel almost certainly formed the central panel of a polyptych, and its modest dimensions indicate it was part of an altarpiece in side chapel, rather than the high altar. The Metropolitan Museum's *St Mark* (47.3 x 37.5 cm, cut down on all sides) might also be related to the triptych described by Boschini.

²¹ For the *St Martin Triptych* see Rossi (1994), pp.126-27, cat. 5. Rossi argued the work originally comprised a second order.

more paintings or documents pertaining to the artist after this date it is believed he died shortly after this work was made.

Bartolomeo's Success and Achievements

It is reasonable to conclude that Bartolomeo Vivarini had enjoyed great esteem among his fellow Venetians. His local success is particularly attested by the five major altarpieces he installed between 1464 and 1482 at Sant'Andrea della Certosa, SS Giovanni e Paolo and the Frari – the most prestigious funerary sites available in Venice to the Republic's leading patricians – as well as the equal number of commissions for other local churches in this period, and the contract for narratives at the Scuola Grande di San Marco. Given his outstanding success, it is paradoxical that the subsequent reception of Bartolomeo's work has generally been very negative. It is worth asking how the negative historiography can be reconciled with the artist's contemporary success – and what it was about Bartolomeo's works which attracted his commissioners. Not, I think, his supposed superficial but uncomprehending imitation of Giovanni Bellini, as John Steer suggested – for there is little evidence that Bartolomeo was an avid imitator of Bellini.²² Neither could his (much exaggerated) conservatism have been the most attractive feature for Venetian commissioners, as Gentili hypothesised, for there were many artists who could have serviced traditional tastes who did not meet with Bartolomeo's success.²³ In any case, Bellini's *Frari Triptych* or Titian's *Averoldi Polyptych* (1522, SS. Nazaro e Celso, Brescia) demonstrate that commissioners could impose conservative formats even on 'forward-looking' painters.

As we have seen, the artist's business strategies contributed significantly to his commercial success at home and abroad. He advertised his products with prominent signatures which recalled the familiar, long-standing Vivarini brand and also informed potential customers where the studio was to be found. He cultivated contacts skilfully, and attracted business through his parish chapter, his acquaintances at the Scuola Grande di San Marco, and via formal and informal networks, notably the Carthusian and Franciscan Observants orders, and Bergamask émigrés. He was efficient and reliable, adhering to the client's contractual prescriptions in terms of form and subject, and he was able to turn around an order for a large altarpiece in well under a year, all of

²² J. Steer (1982), p.5.

²³ Gentili (1997), p. 264.

which must have sustained his good reputation. He was also pragmatic – whilst he apparently supervised the prolific production of works for export to remoter destinations, he expediently ensured that altarpieces destined for the most prestigious customers and the most prominent sites received the lion's share of his personal attention. He was astutely attentive of his reputation at home so that the altarpieces which bore his name made for the 'shop window' local market were invariably top quality.

Bartolomeo's Venetian altarpieces were indeed splendid but decorous objects, sensitively tailored to their specific settings, and comprising holy figures designed to move the worshipper and involve him or her in the Christian mystery of salvation – the works answered both the devotional needs of supplicants, as well as appealing to their aesthetic sensibilities. Bartolomeo achieved the affective quality of his images through his imaginative and varied characterisation of saints – from the sympathetic description of young male saints, such as Saints Lawrence and Roch, to imposing patriarchs and craggy apostles, or the tender portrayals of the Virgin and child. Never so detached as the schematic figures of Byzantine icons, nor histrionic and mannered in the way of Tura or Crivelli, the saints Bartolomeo described surely moved the supplicant towards an emotional comprehension of their faith – the blood of the Man of Sorrows in the *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece* spills to eloquently show the significance of the redemptory Eucharistic sacrifice, and St. Roch must have offered hope by demonstrating that the imitation of Christ could bring health to body and soul. Formally, the artist conceived his altarpieces as the focal point of the architectonic environment, and he was sensitive to the physical qualities of the setting – in terms of scale, lighting, colour and style his altarpieces were rigorously designed so they would be neither lost in space nor over-dominant of it: the monumental, gothic form of the *St Augustine Polyptych* was proportioned to make an impact against an immense wall-scape, whereas the Frari altarpieces snugly fit their apses, intensely coloured so as not to be obliterated by the strong backlight.

If his iconographic vocabulary was often reliant on family tradition, Bartolomeo also tapped a range of other sources which were particularly resonant for the local public. For instance, after the traditional St Sebastian type used by Antonio had become outmoded, he borrowed Antonello's famous figure of Sebastian from the San Zulian

altarpiece, made for the future Scuola Grande di San Rocco, the fulcrum of the hugely popular cult of Roch in Venice; for the *Misericordia Triptych* Bartolomeo turned to Bon's monumental relief of the Virgin of Mercy, doubtless the most impressive and well-known version of the iconography in Venice; and, of course, he used Castagno's design for a mosaic at St Mark's to inform his late *Dormition*. Bartolomeo arguably produced some of his most successfully descriptive works where he had no Vivarini precedent to guide him, and necessity directed him towards other sources, including popular devotional literature. Diedo's lively *Vita de S. Rocho* informed Bartolomeo's description of the novel saint, and Voragine's *Golden Legend* his tender Meeting of Anna and Joachim. In both cases, Bartolomeo – whose narrative skills are usually overlooked – recounted miracles in a way which was entirely consonant with the texture and tone of their vernacular sources, using gesture, facial expression and incidental detail of background and costume. Of course, in both works the artist inserted an angel (absent from, and superfluous to, the textual accounts) to connote the miraculous nature of the events he described. Through visual signs he presented St Roch as an *alter Christus*, equivalent to the way Diedo's textual hagiography recounted Roch's imitation of Christ through his speech and deeds; Bartolomeo's subtle interpretation would be absent from many later depictions of Roch where the Saint appears rugged and muscular, physically quite unlike traditional images of Christ. Yet the historiography took Bartolomeo's vernacular communicability as merely 'vulgar' in the derogatory sense.

Stylistically Bartolomeo ranged far wider than Antonio – his eclectic eye took in contemporary sculpture and mosaic as well as painting. With swags of fruit and flowers, classicising motifs, and lapidary surfaces, Bartolomeo's earlier works may be associated with the Paduan school, as it was informed by Florentine painting and sculpture, Netherlandish painting, and antiquities.²⁴ The Venetian mosaic aesthetic, as well as the local popularity of icons, may underlie the persistence of gold backgrounds in some works by Bartolomeo and his contemporaries – and was presumably to the taste

²⁴ For the influence of Netherlandish art on painters in Padua, see Ames-Lewis, (1993). Rosand (1997) pp.28-29, described a Venetian tradition derived from the local mosaic practice, where the decoration of the picture-plane was a defining characteristic: 'Venetian painting had traditionally assigned a special value to the picture plane...but as the bearer of its own significant visual richness: gold ground, applied ornament, modelled relief.' (Rosand contrasted this with the Florentine tradition where artists experimented with three-dimensional space.) However, Bartolomeo's work does not completely fit with this type, as he was demonstrably most interested in describing three-dimensional forms than in decorating the picture plane.

of the Venetian public; of course, Venetian painters from Bellini (*San Giobbe Altarpiece*, c 1480, Accademia, Venice) to Titian (*Pietà*, Accademia, Venice) quoted the marcian mosaics quite self-consciously in the golden apses of fictive heavenly chapels. Bartolomeo's feel for sculptural form was directly informed by leading *quattrocento* sculptors such as Bon, Donatello and the Lombardos, as well as the antique fragments he undoubtedly came across in Padua, and Florentine painters including Giotto, Pizolo and Castagno – and his vigorous palette was influenced as much by the topical colour of polychrome applied to sculpture, as by the coloured glass of his birthplace. His versatile vocabulary passed from the playful use of antique motifs in St Mark's throne, to the severely classical lines of the throne of St Ambrose. Bartolomeo was equally versatile in format, moving from the traditional polyptych format of the 1464 altarpiece made for Domenico Diedo to his adoption of the unified *pala* a year later, and back to the polyptych, presumably according to clients' demands. But to some critics Bartolomeo's formal versatility masked his overarching stylistic development, which saw him gradually move away from a graphic, Mantegnesque drawing style towards smoother, more substantial high-renaissance figures, akin to the figure style of Tullio Lombardo, and from mainly static, iconic images to semi-narrative central scenes set in fantastical landscapes.

Appendix 1

Summary Documented Biography

The following table lists chronologically the documentary evidence relating to Bartolomeo Vivarini. References given below relate to documentary sources; see appendix 2 here for further information regarding the altarpieces cited.

c. 1430

Approximate birth date of Bartolomeo Vivarini. There is no documented record of Bartolomeo's age, but his artistic maturity in 1450 indicates he was twenty years of age or older by that date. (See document dated 1489 below recording an apprenticeship which started when the boy was ten years of age and would continue for ten years).¹ Bartolomeo and his older brother Antonio probably grew up on the Venetian island of Murano, as it is known their father Michele worked in the Murano glass industry. For Michele Vivarini, see Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 259, n. 23.

1450

Giovanni d'Alemagna, probably the senior partner in the Vivarini workshop, died in 1450 and work on the Ovetari chapel at the church of the Eremitani in Padua was left incomplete. Lazzarini and Moschetti (1908). See introductory chapter here for the attribution of the vault frescoes to Bartolomeo.

1450

The first record of Bartolomeo's partnership with Antonio appears in the inscription on the altarpiece made for the high altar of S. Gerolamo alla Certosa, Bologna, which states the altarpiece was made by the brothers on behalf of Pope Nicholas V in memory of Cardinal Albergati. Throughout the 1450s and into the 1460s Bartolomeo continued to work as his brother's junior partner, as evidenced by various altarpiece inscriptions in which Bartolomeo is usually named after Antonio. See appendix 2.

¹ The inscription on the lost *Lane Madonna*, Testi (1915), pp. 454-55, which indicated the artist was born in 1432 was almost certainly falsified, and there is no reason work to attribute the work to Bartolomeo Vivarini. See introductory chapter here.

15 September, 1458

Bartolomeo was named sole executor of the will of his ailing sister-in-law Antonia, wife of Antonio:

...Anthonia uxor m[agistr]i Anthonij Vivarino pictoris de confinio s[an]cte Marie formose, inferma...constituit suum solum Commissarios M. Bortolomeum vivarino pictor cognatum suum,...dimittit totam dottem suam que est de duc. ducentj aurj Aloixio, Michaelj et Elene filiis suis equaliter, cum hoc quod eorum defit...ante etatem legitimam eius pars vadit in superviventes...

Paoletti (1895), p. 18.

1459

The *St John Capestran* panel dated 1459 is Bartolomeo's first known ecclesiastical commission made independently from Antonio. Other surviving independent works which Bartolomeo made in this period were small panels of the Madonna, see appendix 3.

Early 1460s?

The register of members of the Scuola Grande di San Marco includes the undated entry: 'S[er] Bart[olome]o Uauarin da muran depe[n]tor. S. M[aria] formoxa'. A later hand has added a cross in the margin, indicating the member's death, although no date is given, the same hand also attempted to amend the 'U' to a 'B'.² ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 4, 19v. First published by P. Paoletti (1895), p. 19.

8 January, 1462 m.v. (= 1463)

From the will of his wife Caterina, it is evident Bartolomeo was already married at this date. His wife was pregnant, probably with the couple's first child, for the pregnancy was the occasion of Caterina's testament which makes no mention of other offspring. Bartolomeo was made executor, main beneficiary of the will and guardian of the unborn child:

Ego Catherina consors magistri Bartholomei Vivarini pictoris de confinio sancte Marie Formose, timens quod premissum est et nolens ab intestato decedere, ne mea bona inordinata remaneant, vocari ad me feci presbiterum Benedictum de Smeritis ecclesie santi Joannis Decollati plebanum Venetiarumque notarium, ipsumque rogavi ut hoc meum scriberet

² For the fluctuation of the form of the family name from Vivarini to Bavarini, Testi (1915), p. 315-16 and p. 43; as the name was originally written 'Vavarin', and only later changed to 'Bavarin', Testi's contention that the record does not refer to Bartolomeo Vivarini is almost certainly incorrect.

testamentum..... esse volo meos fidei commissarios suprascriptum Magistrum Bartholomeum virum meum..... Item cum ego sim pregnans, volo et ordino, quod si parturiero filiam feminam ipsa habeat et habere debeat ducatos ducentos pro suo maritare et sit semper in regimine et gubernatione dicti viri mei eius patris. Si vero esset masculus habeat solummodo ducatos centum quinquaginta auri, et sit etiam semper in gubernatione et in regimine dicti eius patris..... Residuum vero omnium bonorum meorum..... dimitto suprascripto Bartholomeo viro.....

Ludwig (1905), pp 16-17, doc. 2.

Later documents show the couple would have a son, 'Z[uan] Alvise Vivarin q. ser bortolomeo' (d. 1523), and daughters Lucia, Cristina and Elisabetta. For Zuan Alvise and Lucia Vivarini, see P. Paoletti (1895), p. 20; for Elisabetta, below. It is assumed the date cited by Ludwig (1462) is Venetian style. I have been unable to examine this document, as the *busta* has been withdrawn from consultation due to the poor condition of its contents.

1464

The last altarpiece on which Bartolomeo is known to have collaborated with Antonio was the 1464 *Osimo Polyptych*. The brothers' inscription, now obliterated, was recorded in a 17th-century source. Massa (2000), p. 90 and p. 99, n. 23.

1463-64

The account book of Procurator Domenico Diedo includes payments to an unnamed artist for an '*ancona* of the Madonna', made for Diedo's funerary chapel at Sant'Andrea della Certosa. It is argued in chapter 1 that the artist may be identified as Bartolomeo Vivarini and that the altarpiece concerned was the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna*. Diedo was also a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco. See chapter 1 and appendices 4 and 5 here.

11 April, 1466

Bartolomeo's nephew Lorenzo (son of Giovanni d'Alemagna) joined the Venice Certosa as a novice shortly after Bartolomeo's *Polyptych of the Madonna* was installed in the Diedo chapel there. Lorenzo donated his patrimony to his cousin Lena, Antonio's daughter:

...Jo fra Lorenzo novitio fio q.magistro Antonio Zuane depentor nelo monastero de Sancto Andrea de lido...desiderando cavar l'anema mia de vero obligo e l'anima de mio pare e de mia

mare de purgatorio voio...che la parte la qual me spetta...si dato a mia cusina Lena fiola de mio barba magistro Anthonio depentor vivarin da Muran in questo modo zoè che mie fradei per la parte che me speta adesso over aspetar me podesse de ben de mio pare o per de mia madre e siano tanti lavori de sogno over de destaio (?) a la certosa...per la quantità del montar de la mia parte li quail danari romanir in man del padre prior nostro per el maridar over munegar de la sopradicta Lena mia cusina dandoli li dicti danari quando la sarà fatta sposa; over per alter sue necessitate....

Paoletti (1929), p. 87 n. 1; Griffiths (1976), p. 4, p. 10.

31 December, 1465

Bartolomeo and Antonio were named as executors and principal beneficiaries of the will of Cristina, a widow living in the parish of S. Canciano:

Cristina relicata simonis de ludovico de conf. s.canciani ... volo meos...Commissarios magistrum Antonium et bartolomeum pictores Sanct[e] Marie formoxe...Dimitto residuum omnium meorum bonorum...equaliter dictis Antonio et bartholameo comissarijs meis...

Cristina's later will of 1466 shows that she was by then residing in Antonio's house in the parish of Santa Maria Formosa. The later will was witnessed by frame-maker Lodovico da Forlì (noted also in appendix 8 here); Bartolomeo was not mentioned in that document. P. Paoletti (1895), p. 19; *ibid.* for the 1466 will. See below for Cristina's third will of 1484.

10 January, 1467 m.v. (= 1468)

A contract was agreed together with Andrea da Murano for two scenes of the life of Abraham for the *sala capitolare* of the Scuola Grande di San Marco:

Sia Manifesto a chi vedra questa schritura chome misser Antonio Zivran vardian grando dela schuola de Misser S. marchio e compagnj e romaxo dachordo chon M[aestr]o bortolomeo e andrea da muran pentori de depenzer uno teler in do pezi suso i qual de depenzer la istoria de bramo zoe una per pezo le quale istorie de esser bone e bele e ben fate chomprexe de tuto chome se rechiede ale dite istorie e depente de boni cholori fini oro azuro oltramarin marizi lacha e verdi e altri cholori achadera ale sopra schrite istorie che tuti sia in perfezion. i qual cholori e oro e tute chosse andara in dito lavor de far a tute sue spexe. El dito M[aestr]o bortolameo e andrea chadauno de loro in parte in tuto e ubligadi a far la dita opera ed aver per so manifatura quando lavera conpido le dite istorie tanto quanto à maistro jacomo belin zoe rata per rata e paso per paso e pe per pe mesurando i diti teleri largezo longeza chome e dito ala misura de quelli de M[aestr]o Jacomo intendando che si i diti maestri servirano ben son

contenti cha el sia in liberta de quei ofiziali se trovera li dona sora marcha quello che ala sua dischizion parera o piu o men o tanto di quello aveva M[ae]str[o] Jacopo belin.'

El pagamento daver in questo modo che subito che i averano prinzipia a desegnar abia per chapara duc[a]ti 5, e chome i averano conpido de desegnar abia duc[a]ti 12 ½ . El resto de pagamento de aver de tempo in tempo secondo che landara lavorando chusi de tempo in tempo i se de andar dagando danari e fazando el suo dover loro le raxon che anchora loro abia el suo, E chusi per chiazza de tute le parte...

P.F. Brown read the word 'bramo' (Abraham), for 'buram' (Burano) as it was transcribed by Paoletti. Brown's reading is the more convincing, as the subject of Abraham is consonant with the narrative scheme which included other scenes from the Old Testament as well as the Passion of Christ. The canvasses would have been destroyed in the 1485 conflagration at the Scuola. ASV, Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 16 bis, Pt. 2, 36; Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 266, n. 40. See also Ludwig (1905), p. 17, no. 4; Griffiths (1976), p. 11; P. F. Brown, (1988) p. 269, no.7.

1473

The *St Augustine* polyptych at SS Giovanni e Paolo is inscribed 1473. It is argued in chapter 2 that Domenico Dolfìn was the altarpiece commissioner; Dolfìn's 1494 will records his desire to be buried before the altarpiece: 'Prima voglio et ordino che renduta sara l anima al onnipotente, el corpo mio sia sepolido in la giesia di S. Zuanepolo al altar di S.Agostino...' Dolfìn was also a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco. See chapter 2 and appendix 6 here.

October 1473

In his will, Piero Corner, member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco, provided for the furnishing of the family chapel at the Frari in the event he should die before its completion: '...se la capella nostra da li frar minori non stia compida avanti la mia morte i detti mie heredi e nevodi siano tegnudi de farla compir de I beni de la comessaria de mio padre ben...'. It is argued in chapter 3 here that Piero himself commissioned the *St Mark Triptych* from the artist. The will was witnessed by Leonardo Boldrin, an artist associated with the Vivarini. See also appendix 7.

1474

Bartolomeo agreed a contract (lost) in 1474 with the Congregazione del Clero which was based at his parish church, Santa Maria Formosa. The contract was recorded in the sodality's eighteenth-century archival register, in both its index, 'Accordo per la

Palla dell'Altare del 1474 -----car[te] 15 n.o 9' and on the indicated folio: '1474- N.o 9 / Accordo per far la Palla dell'Altare della Reverenda Congregazione di Santa Maria Formosa ut ibi' The *Misericordia Triptych* to which the register refers was inscribed 1475. Sponza has shown documents published by Ludwig (1905), p. 17, docs. 6, 7, 8, 9, and believed to concern the *Misericordia Triptych*, are, in fact, irrelevant. ASPV, Congregazione di Santa Maria Formosa, b.13, Catastico, varia, s.n. (68), C. 3r, and 15r.n.9, cited by Mussolino (1972), pp. 21-22 and Sponza (1999).

1475

Bartolomeo's 1475 'Lussingrande' altarpiece was made for the Certosa near Padua, mentioned in the contract for the 1484 *Dormition* published by Sambin (1964).

1476

Alvise inscribed his *Montefiorentino Polyptych*: 1476 . LUDOVICVS . VIVARINVS . MVRIANENSIS . P. This was Alvise's first work as an independent master, and he may have left his presumed apprenticeship with Bartolomeo at this date. Steer (1982), p. 4, noted the inscription links the artist's name to the family firm, particularly in the reference to Murano where Alvise never lived.

15 March, 1484

Contract for the *Dormition of the Virgin* for the Certosa near Padua. The contract also refers to an earlier *pala* by the artist in the same church, the 1475 *Lussingrande* altarpiece. Sambin (1964), pp. 41-42, doc. 14., reproduced in appendix 9 here. Griffiths (1976), p. 17.

24 April, 1484

Bartolomeo's unmarried daughter Elisabetta was named as a beneficiary of the will of Cristina (see also 31 Dec. 1465, above):

...Ego Christina quondam symonis de Ludovico de confinio sancti Cantiani.....Residuum dimitto.....et Elisabet filie magistri Bartholomej pictoris meis amabilibus et dilectis amicis, dividendum inter eos duos equaliter, et casu quo unus eorum deficeret pars deficientis deveniat in superviventem.

Ludwig (1905), p. 18, no. 10.

11 October 1487

Bartolomeo's daughter Elisabetta was named as beneficiary in the will of her cousin(?) Nicolosa:

...ego Nicolosa uxor domini Andrea Lazari a volta panorum de confinio sancti Eustachij...ac
dari volo Hisabethae consanguineae meae et filiae magistri Bartholomej pictoris ducatos auri
quindecim pro suo maritare.

See also the document of July 20, 1490 below. Nicolosa was named in a document of 1521, by which time she was widowed and resided with Bartolomeo's son, Zuan Alvise, his daughter Lucia, and Lucia's husband.

Ludwig (1905), p. 18, no.11. For the document of 1521, Ludwig (1905), p. 20.

16 June 1489

A document contracted on Murano concerns a painter identified only as 'maestro Bartolomeo pittore' who employed Giovanni, son of Domenico de Casali, as his assistant. The child was aged ten and the contract would last for ten years. The artist agreed to teach the boy 'eius artem et misterium pictoris', and in return would pay him ten gold ducats annually, and would feed, clothe and house him. It is possible this document does not refer to Bartolomeo Vivarini.

Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 268, n. 45; Testi (1915), pp. 439-40.

20 July, 1490

A document of 1490 indicates Bartolomeo had returned to live on the island of Murano. It regards the dowry of Elisabetta, Bartolomeo's daughter, used by her husband as security against a loan:

Egregius ac prudens vir dominus Romanus Rossetus de confinio Sancti Johannis decollati
tamquam maritus dominae Hisabethae filiae prudentis viri magistri Bartholomei Vivarini pictoris
de Muriano et eius vice ac nomine agens, et in propria eius specie: et pro qua quidem domina
Hisabetha uxore sua ipse principaliter et in solidum se obligando de rato promisit.....ac
fecit.....plenariam et irrevocabilem securitatem spectabilibus ac generosis viris dominis
guardiano magno scholae batutorum sancti Marci ac sotiis (*sic*) licet absentibus de ducatis auri
viginti eidem dominae Hisabethae uxori suae pro subventionem dotis suae ac sui maritare sibi dari
promissis...

Ludwig (1905), p. 18, no.12.

1490

Bartolomeo's last Venetian work was made in 1490 for the demolished church of S. Geminiano, it included the panels *Saints Barbara and Magdalene*.

1491

Bartolomeo's final inscription appears on the 1491 *St Martin Triptych*. It may be assumed Bartolomeo died shortly after the execution of this work. (Some texts erroneously date his death to 1499, because the inscription on the 1484 *Dormition* had been altered to read 1499).

Appendix 2

Summary of Altarpieces

Bartolomeo Vivarini's altarpieces are listed below, with details of date, current and original locations, and inscription. Catalogue-style descriptions and bibliographies may be found in cited sources, namely Pallucchini (1962) and, for certain works, D'Elia (1962), Humfrey (1993) and Rossi (1994). The summary does not include unsatisfactory attributions and stray minor altarpiece panels for which companion panels have not been convincingly identified.¹ Also excluded are works signed by Antonio and Giovanni d'Alemagna without Bartolomeo, to which Bartolomeo may have contributed as an apprentice or assistant. Small panels of the Madonna are listed separately in appendix 3.

1450 *Certosa Polyptych*, Bartolomeo and Antonio Vivarini (fig. 0.01)

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna; provenance: S. Gerolamo alla Certosa, Bologna.

ANNO. DOMINI MCCCCL. HOC. OP[US] INCEPTUM. FUT. ET. PERFECTUM. VENETIIS.
AB. ANTONIO. / ET. BARTOLOMEO. FR[ATR] IB[US]. DE. MVRANO. NI.[COLAO]. V^O
PO[N]T. MAX^O. OB. MONVME[N]TUM. R.[EVERENDI] P.[ATRIS] D.[OMINI] NI.[COLAI]
CAR.[DINALIS] OLI[M]. S[ANCTAE] + [CRUCIS]. Pallucchini (1962), p. 108, cat. 90;
Humfrey (1993), p. 340, cat.1.

1451 *High Altarpiece of S. Francesco*, Padua. Bartolomeo and Antonio Vivarini

Dispersed, surviving panels in National Gallery, Prague and Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna and elsewhere, see Zeri; Inscription recorded in old sources:

MCCCCLI ANTONIUS ET BARTHOLOMEUS FRATRES DE MURANO PINXERUNT HOC
OPUS

Antonio and Giovanni d'Alemagna had made the 1447 *Nativity Altarpiece* for an altar in the same church.

Zeri (1988).

¹ For instance the stray *St Bartholomew* in the Kress Collection, Shapley (1966), p. 33, is excluded, as are doubtful attributions by Ruggieri (1993), *Man of Sorrows* (private collection, Bergamo), and Pallucchini (1962) p. 122 cat 172-73, and the Uffizi *St Louis of Toulouse* (Inv. 1890, 3346), also unsatisfactorily attributed to Bartolomeo.

1452 *Annunciation with Sts Augustine and Filippo Benizzi*, Bartolomeo and Antonio Vivarini

Fondazione Cagnola, Gazzada, Varese. The iconography indicates a Servite commission, scholars have proposed S. Maria dei Servi, Venice, or Santissima Annunziata, Rovato.

MCCCCLII BARTHOLOMEVS ET ANTONIVS FRATRES DE MVRANO PINXERVNT.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 109, cat. 98-99; Humfrey (1993), p. 340, cat. 2; Agosti et al. (2002), p. 68, cat. 5

1456 *High Altarpiece of S. Maria della Carità*, Antonio and Bartolomeo (?) Vivarini

Lost. Contract agreed by Antonio with the church of S. Maria della Carità, Venice. Fogolari (1924), pp. 77-79; see also introduction here.

1458 *Arbe Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini

Franciscan Observant convent of S. Eufemia, Arbe (Rab), Dalmatia

ANTONIUS ET BARTHOLOMEUS DE MURANO FRATRES PINXERUNT FRANCISUS
INCISIT 1458

Pallucchini (1962), p. 110, cat. 100; Griffiths (1976), p. 19

1459 *St John Capestran*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.12)

Louvre. Original provenance unidentified, the iconography indicates the panel was commissioned for a Franciscan Observant convent. The original function of the panel is unclear.

.OPVS. BARTHOLOMEI. DE MVRANO. 1459.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 116, cat. 133; Brejon de Lavergnée and Thiébaud (1981) M.I. 488.

c. 1459 *St Bernardine Altarpiece*, Antonio and Bartolomeo (?) Vivarini

S. Francesco della Vigna, Venice. No surviving inscription – the altarpiece could be missing panels and is not in its original frame.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 113, cat. 114.

c. 1460 *Madonna Enthroned*, Bartolomeo Vivarini

Yale University Art Collection (Rabinowitz Gift, 1999).

Probably the central panel of a dispersed polyptych, of which the original location is unknown. No surviving inscription – the panel appears to have been cut down.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 117, cat. 139.

c. 1460 *Lecce Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop

Museo Provinciale, Bari; formerly, S. Caterina, Galatina, S. Italy

Inscription obliterated.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 112-13, cat. 113; Griffiths (1976), pp. 23-24.

Early 1460s *Aurio Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo (?) Vivarini and workshop

Castello Svevo, Bari; formerly, the church at Aurio, Lecce.

The altarpiece is in very poor condition, 3 of 7 panels survive and any inscription has been lost.

Berenson (1957), pl. 109; Pallucchini (1962), p. 117 cat. 138 (central panel only);

D'Elia (1964), pp. 59-60, cat. 58; Griffiths (1976), p. 24;

1464 *Osimo Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.13)

Pinacoteca Civica, Osimo. Originally made for the Franciscan Observant church of the Annunziata Vecchia, later moved to their new church, Annunziata Nuova, Osimo.

Inscription abraded, recorded in an old source: ANTONIUS ET BARTOLOMEUS DE MURANO PINXERUNT 1464.

Pallucchini p. 111 cat. 107; Massa (2000), pp. 89-90 and p. 99, nn.13-23

1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 1.01)

Accademia, Venice; provenance: S. Andrea della Certosa, Venice.

OPUS BA[R]TOLOMEI V[IV]ARINI DE MURANO, MCCCCLXIII

Chapter 1 here.

c. 1465 *Coronation of the Virgin*, Bartolomeo Vivarini

Kress Collection, Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans.

Probably the central panel from a polyptych, which may have also included figures of St. James and St. Francis now in the John G. Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and a Man of Sorrows in Capua Museum. No inscription survives.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 118, cat. 145 (associated panels, pp. 117-18, cat. 142, 143, 147); Shapley (1966), p. 33, fig. 75.

1465 *Naples Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 7.13)

Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples; formerly, S. Domenico (later called S. Leonardo), Bari.

·OPUS· BARTOLOMEI ·VIVARINI · DEMURANO · 1465

Pallucchini (1962), p. 119, cat. 150; Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat.8.

c.1470 *Polignano Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini

The panels are still in the church of the Assunta, Polignano a Mare, Bari, where the altarpiece was originally set on the high altar.

BARTOLOMEVS...N / DEMVRAN ... 14..

Pallucchini (1962), pp. 119-20, cat. 156 (central panel only); D'Elia (1964), pp. 60-61, cat. 61; Griffiths (1976), p. 24.

1471 *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, Bartolomeo and workshop

Galleria Colonna, Rome; the original provenance is unknown, but the form and inscription indicates it was probably the central panel of a polyptych made for export.

OPVS . FACTVM . VENETIIS . PER . BARTHOLOMEVM . VIVA . RINVM . DE MVRIANO . M .
.CCCCLXXI

Pallucchini (1962), p. 120, cat. 157

Early 1470s (?) *Lehman Ancona*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 4.03)

Lehman Collection, New York; original provenance unknown.

No surviving inscription.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 119, cat. 154.

Early 1470s (?) *Virgin and Child*, Bartolomeo Vivarini

Academy of Arts, Honolulu; original provenance unknown.

Possibly the central panel of a small polyptych similar to the *Lehman Ancona*, of which the central panel is similar to this one in its iconography (Madonna of Humility), composition and dimensions.

Heinemann (1962), pp. 151-52.

1472 *Annunciation*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 4.13)

Museo Provinciale, Bari; provenance: Duomo, Mondugno, near Bari

Probably the central section of a polyptych.

• OPVS • FACTVM • VENETIIS • PER • BARTHOLO / MEVM • VIVA • RINVM • DE MVRIANO •
1472

Salmi (1919), pp. 166-69; Pallucchini (1962), pp. 120-21, cat. 161; D'Elia (1964), pp. 61-62, cat. 62.

1473 *St Augustine Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 2.01)

Three panels remain in the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo; panels possibly associated at the Correr Museum, Venice and Berlin

BARTHOLOMEUS . VIVARINVS. DE . MVRIANO . PINXIT . MCCCCIXXIII. (S/C)

Chapter 2 here.

1474 *St Mark Triptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 3.01)

Frari, Venice

OPUS. FACTUM. PER BARTHOLOMEUM. / VIVARINUM. DE. MURIANO. 1474.

Chapter 3 here.

1475 *Madonna della Misericordia Triptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 4.01)

S. Maria Formosa, Venice

BARTHOLOMEVS • VIVARINVS • DE / MVRIANO PINXIT • M • CCCCLXXIII[II].

See chapter 4 here.

1475 *Conversano Polyptych*, largely workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 4.04)

Accademia, Venice; formerly, Duomo, Conversano, near Bari.

HOC OPUS SUMPTIBUS DOMINI ANTHONII DE CHARITATE CA/NONICI ECCLESIE DE
CONVERSANO IN FORMAM REDACTUM – EST – 1475 / OPUS FACTUM VENETIIS PER
BARTHOLOMEUM VIVARINUM

Pallucchini (1962), p. 122, cat. 170; Griffiths (1976), p. 25; Nepi Sciré and Valcanover (1985), p. 185.

1475 *Lussingrande Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo and shop (fig. 0.14)

Parish church, Veli Lošinj (Lussingrande), Croatia; made for the Certosa of Vigodazere, Padua.

OPUS.FACTUM.VENETIIS. PER . BARTHOLOMEUM . VIVARINUM. DE . MURIANO. 1475
Sambin (1964); Humfrey (1993), p. 345, cat. 19

c. 1476 *St Jerome*, Bartolomeo Vivarini

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, (formerly, Mario Baldi Collection, Ferrara); original provenance unknown. Evidently a side panel from a polyptych - perhaps identifiable with the lost *Madonna and Child with Saints Jerome and Catherine* from the Venetian Senate - see introductory chapter here. For the provenance of the lost triptych, Zorzi (2001), Doc. E, p. 403. For the *St Jerome*, Pallucchini (1962), p. 118, cat 146 and Shapley (1966) p. 33.

1476 *Bari Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.15)

S. Nicola, Bari

FACTUM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEUM / VIVA RINUM DE MURIANO PINXIT. 1476
Humfrey (1993), p. 346, cat. 21.

1477 *St Ambrose Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 5.01)

Accademia, Venice; originally S. Giovanni Evangelista, Venice.

S[ER] AMBR[BROGIVS] VIVIANI CAST[ALD]^o SANT[US] [LVDO?]VIC[VS?]S[ER] PETRVS
MUNTI[N]. SCR[IVAN] E CONF[RATELLI]; IACOBVS DE FAENCIE IN.CISIT.

Chapter 5 here.

1477 *Morano Calabro Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop

Franciscan Observant convent of S. Bernardino, Morano Calabro, S. Italy.

OPVS . FACTVM . VENETIIS / PER BARTHOLOMEVM VIVA / RINVM . DEMVRIANO .
1477.

Humfrey (1986), pp. 76-77 suggested the format of this polyptych, very unusual for a Venetian altarpiece, was prescribed according to the Calabrian tastes of the client. Pallucchini (1962), p. 124, cat. 183; Griffiths (1976), pp. 25-26.

1478 *Bragora Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 5.17)

S. Giovanni in Bragora, Venice; 3 of 4 panels remain in the church; cimasa of Man of Sorrows, lost.

BARTOLOMEVS VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PINXIT 1478

Chapter 5 here.

c. 1479 *San Vidal Triptych* Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 6.10)

Two surviving panels in S. Stefano, Venice; formerly S. Vidal, Venice.

Central image of St Roch lost, inscription unrecorded

Chapter 6 here.

c. 1480 *Altamura Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop

Surviving panels, Museo Provinciale, Bari; the original provenance is unknown, the iconography indicates a Franciscan Observant commission. No inscription – the surviving half-length panels are believed to have come from the upper-tier of the altarpiece.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 125 cat. 187-90; D’Elia (1964), pp 62-63, cat. 63; Griffiths (1976), p. 24.

1480 *St. Roch Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 6.01)

S. Eufemia, Giudecca, Venice

Inscription recorded in an old source: BARTOLOMEUS VIVARINUS PINXIT 1480

See chapter 6 here.

c.1480 *Redeemer Enthroned*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 3.21)

Museo Civico, Bassano; the original location is unknown – possibly S. Geminiano, Venice where Boschini (1674), S. Marco, p. 74, saw a Vivarinesque triptych with the Redeemer Enthroned, Saints Saba and Mark. The Metropolitan Museum’s *St Mark* (fig. 2.07) might be related to the same triptych.

The inscription is largely abraded: F / B[AR]TH[OLOM]AE[US] [V]IVA[RINUS] [DE MURI]AN[O] [PINXI]T.

Magagnato and Passamani (1978), pp. 117-18, cat. 112. Pallucchini, (1962) p. 123, cat. 176; concluding chapter here.

1480 *Zumpano Triptych*, mainly workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini

S. Giorgio, Zumpano, S. Italy

OPVS . FACTVM . VENETIIS PER BARTHOL / OMEVM VIVARINVM. DEMVRIANO 1480.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 125, cat. 191; Griffiths (1976), p. 26.

c. 1480 *Madonna and Child*, (half-length), Bartolomeo Vivarini

Kress, Seattle Art Museum; the original location is unknown. There is no

inscription - the work was probably the upper central panel of a polyptych. It is

possibly associated with three panels of saints, John the Baptist, Catherine of

Alexandria and Anthony of Padua, from the Frizzoni Salis collection, Bergamo.

Shapley (1966), p. 32, fig. 72; Pallucchini (1967), p. 204; see Testi (1915), p. 486,

for the Bergamo panels.

1482 *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo and workshop (fig. 7.01)

Frari, Venice

BARTHOLOMEVS VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PINXIT. 1482.

Chapter 7 here.

1483 *Andria Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (fig. 8.06)

Surviving panels, Museo Provinciale, Bari; Man of Sorrows, private collection

Bergamo; made for the Franciscan Observant convent of S. Maria Vetere, Andria,

Puglia.

OPUS FACTVM VENETIIS PER / BARTHOLOMEVM VIVARIN / VM DE MVRIANO. 1483.

Antonio also installed a polyptych in this convent (1467).

Pallucchini (1962) p. 127, cat. 198-200; for the 1467 polyptych *ibid.*, p. 113, cat.

117-122. D'Elia (1964), pp. 63-64, cat. 64; Griffiths (1976), p. 26. For the Man of

Sorrows, Zeri (1988), pp. 164-65.

1484 (contract date) *Dormition of the Virgin*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop
(fig. 8.01)

Metropolitan Museum, New York; provenance to the Certosa of Vigodazere, Padua.

Inscription now abraded, variously recorded in old sources perhaps due to

retouching: HOC OPUS FACTUM FUIT VENETIIS PER / BARTHOLOMEUM VIVA /
RINUM DE MURANO 1480. (*sic*; elsewhere 1499).

Pallucchini (1962), p. 128-29, cat. 208; Sambin (1964); Humfrey (1986).

1485 *Almenno Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (fig. 8.07)

The central panel is found in the church for which the altarpiece was made, S. Bartolomeo, Almenno S. Bartolomeo, near Bergamo; Man of Sorrows panel, Bob Jones University Collection of Religious Art, Greenville, S. Carolina.

FACTUM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEUM VIVARIUM DE MURIANO PINXIT 1.4.8.5.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 128, cat. 204 and 207; Rossi (1994) p. 103 and pp. 125-26, cat. 2.

1485 *St George*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (fig. 6.13)

State Museums, Berlin; formerly Solty Collection (unknown original provenance).

Probably the central panel from a polyptych. FACTVM · VENETIIS · PER

BARTHOLOMEVM / VIVA · RINVM DE MVRIANO PINXIT · 1485

Pallucchini (1962), p. 127, cat. 203

1485 *Arbe Polyptych* (II), Bartolomeo and workshop (fig. 6.11)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; made for S. Andrea (Benedictine nuns), Arbe (Rab), Dalmatia.

Mixed media polyptych which includes a wooden *Pietà*.

FACTVM · VENETIIS · PER BARTHOLOMEVM / VIVA · RINVM DE MVRIANO PINXIT
· MCCCCLXXXV

Pallucchini (1962), p. 127, cat. 201; Griffiths (1976) p. 19.

1486 *Melzi d'Eril Polyptych*, largely workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 6.07)

Ambrosiana, Milan, made for S. Giuliano, Albino, near Bergamo.

FACTVM VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEVM VIVA / RINVM DE MVRIANO PINXIT / 1486.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 129, cat. 212; Rossi (1994), p. 103 and pp. 133-34, cat. 21.

Later 1480s *Alzano Sopra Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop

In its original form, a mixed media polyptych with a central carved martyrdom of St. Lawrence (lost); four surviving panels of female saints, cut down, are now in SS Fratelli Martiri, Ranica, Bergamo. Originally made for the parish church of S. Lorenzo, Alzano Sopra, Bergamo. Inscription unrecorded.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 131, cat. 220-21; Rossi (1994) p. 103 and p. 135, cat. 24.

1488 *Scanzo Polyptych*, largely workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 8.03)
Accademia Carrara, Bergamo; made for the parish church of S. Pietro, Scanzo, near Bergamo.

FACTUM VENETIIS PER BARTH / OLOMEUM VIVARIUM DE MAURIANO / PINXIT . 1488
Pallucchini (1962), pp. 129-30, cat. 213-14; Rossi (1994) p. 104 and p. 127, cat. 6.

1480s (?) *Endine Polyptych*, uncertain attribution
Lost altarpiece of the parish church, Endine, near Bergamo.
Inscription unrecorded
Rossi (1994) p. 104.

1480s (?) *Nese Triptych*, uncertain attribution
Lost altarpiece of the parish church of S. Giorgio, Nese, near Bergamo.
Inscription unrecorded
Rossi (1994) p.126 (1994), cat. 3.

1480s (?) *Rosary Triptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (?)
Lost altarpiece of the parish church of S. Andrea, Bracca, near Bergamo
Inscription unrecorded, although a nineteenth-century source stated the work was 'di Bartolomeo da Murano'
Rossi (1994), p. 104 and p.132, cat. 17

1490 *St James Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (fig. 8.04)
Getty Museum, Los Angeles; made for the parish church of S. Giacomo, Vallalta, near Bergamo.
OPVS FACTVM.VENETIIS PER BARTHOLOMEVM VIVA / RINVM DE MVRIANO 1490
Humfrey (1994); Rossi (1994), pp. 132-33, cat. 19.

1490 *Saints Barbara and Mary Magdalene*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (figs. 8.09-8.10)
Accademia, Venice; provenance: S. Geminiano, Venice.
BARTHOLOMEVS . VIVA . RINUS . DE MVRANO . PINXIT . 1490.
Pallucchini (1962), pp. 130-31, cat. 217 and 218; Griffiths (1976), p. 18. Nepi Sciré and Valcanover (1985), p. 185.

1491 *St Martin Triptych*, largely workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 8.08)
Accademia Carrara, Bergamo; formerly, parish church of S. Martino at Torre
Boldone, near Bergamo.

OPUS . FACTVM . VENETIIS / PER . BARTHOLOMEVM . VIVA. / RINVM.DE.MVRANO .
I .491.

Pallucchini (1962) p. 131, cat. 222; Rossi (1994), pp.126-27, cat. 5

Date unknown *Triptych of the Virgin and Child with Saints Ambrose, John the Baptist, Protasius and Gervase* Bartolomeo Vivarini (?)

Lost, formerly of the *albergo* of the Milanese nationals' *scuola*, Venice.

Zanetti (1972), pp. 30-31 and Boschini (1674), S. Polo, p. 46.

Appendix 3

Small Madonna Panels

The following summary of Bartolomeo Vivarini's panels of the Madonna is intended to reveal the typical characteristics of small panels of this subject made by the artist for the domestic environment. It is not an exhaustive catalogue of this subject in Bartolomeo's oeuvre and Madonna panels which appear to have originated in altarpieces are omitted, as are insecure attributions;¹ fuller bibliographic information may be found in the sources cited. Works are listed in approximate chronological order.

Westminster Abbey, London (fig. 0.22)

84 x 68 cm

The panel is atypical of the artist for its iconography and the arrangement of the figures. The figures are set in classicising niche with a festoon of fruit over and with a landscape background. The naked child stands upon a ledge, holding cherries. The style indicates the strong Paduan influence on Bartolomeo's early work. The Virgin's physiognomy is sufficiently close to the signed NG 284 to confirm the attribution to Bartolomeo. There is no surviving inscription.

Pallucchini (1962) p. 116, cat. 134.

¹ Panels are omitted which appear to have been made for altarpieces, such as the full-length *Madonna and Child Enthroned* (Pallucchini (1962) p. 120, cat. 157, Galleria Colonna, Rome) and that at the Galleria Borghese (Pallucchini (1962), p. 128, cat. 205), the half-length panel in the Kress Collection (Shapley, (1966), p. 32, K 200), see appendix 2. Also omitted are half-lengths which appear to have been cut-down from full-length polyptych panels, namely the example in the Correr Madonna (inv. cl. I 1475) (see chapter 2), a panel in Bologna (Pallucchini (1962) pp. 116-17, cat. 137), and the Madonna formerly on view at the Museo Vetrario, Murano (Although Pallucchini (1962), p. 116, excluded that work from his catalogue on the grounds that repainting had rendered it impossible to judge and it has evidently been subject to significant intervention and is in very poor condition, in my opinion it is autograph. It has probably been cut down from a full-length panel as, uncharacteristically, there is no infant, but the Virgin appears to pray as if over the child, as in the type exemplified by the 1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna*. The inscription is probably false - 'Anno Domini' is uncharacteristic, and the work is better dated to the late 1460s or early 1470s, not 1459: OPVS. BA[R]TOLOMEI V[IV]ARINI DE MVRANO . AN[NO] DOM[INI] MCCCCLVIII.)

The anomalous small *Virgin and Child Enthroned* from the Borghese gallery (Pallucchini (1962) p. 128, cat. 205) is also excluded as it may have been the central panel of a small polyptych, given its form and provenance to a religious confraternity, the Congregazione di Carità, Forlì.

Unsafe attributions are not included in the summary: the *Lane Madonna* (see introduction and appendix 1); three panels attributed to Bartolomeo Vivarini by Pallucchini in 1962, (p. 115, cat. 129-131), attributions which are not convincing due to disparity in style, motif and composition with secure works (see introduction here); and a panel from a private collection near Verona, which Pallucchini attributed to Bartolomeo in 1967 (fig. 254), but which seems quite remote from the artist's work.

National Gallery, London (fig. 0.23)

95 x 63.5 cm

The *Virgin and Child with Saints Paul and Jerome*. The figures stand behind a draped ledge, with the male saints behind the Virgin. The cramped composition indicates Saints Jerome and Paul were not included in the original design. The clothed child is held in the Virgin's arms, to her left side. The gold background and haloes are restorations.

On a *cartellino*: OPVS . BARTOLOMEI. VIVARINI . DEMVRANO

Pallucchini (1962) p. 116, cat. 135; Davies (1986), p. 561, NG 284; Dunkerton et al (1991), pp. 69-70; Baker and Henry (1995), p. 711.

Museo Civico Correr, Venice

71 x 49 cm

The Virgin stands behind a ledge holding the clothed child with her right arm. The background is plain (gold). Inscribed on a *cartellino* on the ledge: BARTOLAM. VIVARI. / DE MVRAN.

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 155, p. 119.

Metropolitan Museum, New York

71 x 62.5 cm

Known as the *Davis Madonna*. A cloth of honour is draped over a line, and the Virgin's mantle is draped over the ledge. The clothed child sits upon a cushion on the ledge, supported by Virgin's right hand. Inscribed on a *cartellino* on the ledge, set to the right:

OPVS FACTVM...S.BARTHOLOMEV / ...VIVA. R[IN]VM DE MVRIANO 1472

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 158, p. 120.

Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, Mass. (fig. 0.25)

92.1 x 66.8 cm

The Virgin supports the clothed child in her left arm. A cloth of honour is draped over a line, and her mantle is draped over the ledge. The child sucks his fingers. Apparently of autograph quality, although Pallucchini considered it a studio version after the similar panel in Sassari (see below). No inscription.

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 160, p. 120

Museo Sanna, Sassari

81.5 x 55.5 cm

The composition is identical to the Fogg Museum version. Aru suggested this was the panel dated 1473 which Ridolfi saw in the house of Giovanni Battista Fais, designer of fountains. Inscribed on the ledge, to the right: BARTHOLOMEVS. VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PNXIT [SIC] MCCCCLXXIII

Aru (1905); Testi (1915), p. 461; Pallucchini (1962), cat. 159, p. 120.

Private Collection, Great Britain (fig. 0.26)

47 x 37 cm

The Virgin supports the clothed child in her left arm, his feet rest on a cushion which is placed on the ledge. The background is plain gold. The panel retains its original frame. There is no inscription naming the artist, although a partly-abraded dedication or prayer appears on the frame (not transcribed by Pallucchini and not legible from photographs). Pallucchini (1988).

Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery, Washington (fig. 0.24)

52.5 x 40 cm

The Virgin supports the clothed child in her arms, and the child's foot rests on cushion placed on a ledge, over which her mantle is draped. The background comprises a cloth of honour and a detailed landscape. No inscription.

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 174, p. 123; Shapley (1966), p. 32.

John G. Johnson Art Collection, Philadelphia

66 x 48.2 cm

The naked child stands upon the ledge and makes a sign of benediction, he is supported by the Virgin's right hand. The background comprises a cloth of honour and the suggestion of a landscape. No inscription.

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 194, p. 126.

M.H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.

57.9 x 42.5 cm

The semi-naked child is asleep, laid along the ledge and the virgin prays over him. The background comprises a cloth of honour, and a landscape is glimpsed through arched windows.

On a *cartellino* to the right side of the ledge: BARTHOLOMEVS. VIVARINVS . DE MVRIANO PINXIT 1.481

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 195, p. 126.

Pinacoteca Sabauda, Turin.

73 x 54 cm

The naked child sits on a cushion upon the ledge. The background is very damaged. On a *cartellino* at right side of the ledge: BARTHOLOMEVS. VIVARINVS . DE MVRIANO 1481., possibly spurious or retouched (?)

Pallucchini (1962), cat. 196, p.126; Rossi (1994), p. 129, cat. 10

Private Collection, Bologna.

The clothed child sits on a cushion upon the ledge, supported by the Virgin's left arm. Her mantle is draped over the ledge. The background comprises a cloth of honour, and a landscape is glimpsed through an arched window. On a *cartellino* to the right of the ledge: BARTHOLOMEVS . VIVARINVS / DE MVRIANO PINXIT . 1.482

Pallucchini (1967) p. 201, and fig. 256.

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo.

55 x 40 cm

The naked child reclines upon a cushion on the ledge, and is set to the Virgin's left. The background consists of a cloth of honour and a landscape seen through rectangular windows. Inscribed on the ledge: 1486 FACTVM . VENETIIS . PER BARTHOLO / MEVM . VIVARINVM DE MVRIANO, possibly spurious or retouched (?)

Pallucchini (1962) p. 129, cat. 209; Rossi (1988) p. 319, cat. 732 and *idem.* (1994), p. 129, cat. 10.

Italico Brass Collection, Venice.

53 x 43 cm

The naked child stands upon the ledge and makes the sign of benediction; he is set to the Virgin's right. The pose is derivative of the John G. Johnson version. Problems with drawing of infant's lower body and the Virgin's right hand indicate studio assistance. No surviving inscription.

Pallucchini (1962) p. 129, cat. 210.

Hermitage Museum

57.5 x 46.5 cm

The naked child sits on a cushion on a ledge. Inscribed on the ledge: BART. VIVAR. F
1490

Pallucchini (1962) p. 129, cat. 211.

Formerly, Erhardt Collection, Berlin.

69 x 50 cm

The Virgin holds the naked child in her arms. The background comprises a cloth of
honour and landscape. Inscribed on the ledge: .B^O. VIAR. DA . MU

Pallucchini (1962), p. 128, cat. 206.

Appendix 4

The Will of Domenico Diedo (1465, abridged)¹

Jesus Maria, 1465: adi 26 marzo in Venexia et refatto in sto dì,
Non essendo piui certo che dell mancar di questa miser vitta [h]o volut disponer, et ordenar i mie beni quello se habbiano a seguir p[er] mi Domenego Diedo q. Mis Zuane testador dell dito mio testamento a cason in ogni avignimento del mancar mio, quello habbia a seguir, e disponer di fatti mei.

Prima Comissarii voglio siano mad[onn]a Chiara Diedo mia consorte, et S And[re]a Diedo mio nevodo fo de S Ant[oni]o mio fradello, et Pollo Malipiero mio cugnado fo de M Lorenzo e S Franc[esc]o Diedo mio nevodo q. M Ant[oni]o sopraditto, li quali p[er] anni cinque zoe anni 5, solamente, voglio siano p[er] mie comessarii, ad eseguir quello che p[er] mi qui sotto sarà ordenado, e p[er] la mazor parte de loro, et da cinque anni indriedo, detta mia comessaria, sia assegnada, à i procuratori, tutto quello che se troveranno, haver del mio, si in danari come mobeli, imprestidi, et alcune cose à mi pertinente, i qual la siano à seguir l'ordene mio, come qui de sotto sarà ordenado, de tempo in tempo ad' literam.

Separado el corpo mio de questa vita, quello voglio sia vestido della cappa della scolla de S M[ar]co dove son fradello, et quello condur al monastier de Santo Andrea del lido, e li sepellido, nella n[ost]ra capella de Santa Maria p[er] mi fabricada, in quello luogo acompagnado dala scola dita con la congregation della n[ost]ra contrada, con dopieri x: solamente et sulit se facci dir, messe cento zoe cento de S Greguol, di monaci oservanti, dapoi altre messe cento, pur di oservanti preditti p[er] anima mia.

In la sepoltura p[er] mi fata, in dita capella non voglio mai algun altro sia messo in quello excepto, si la predita Mad[onn]a Chiara nostra consorte, voglia, in quella esser posta, et questo ordeno, et p[er] espresso sia seguito.

E p[er] luminaria de detta capella, ogn'anno dianno ducati 3, zoe ducati tre oro alli frati de S[an]to And[re]a preditto p[er] ditta cason.

¹ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1149 no. 73 and *ibid.*, protocollo, carta 50. Other versions are found amongst the *commissaria* documents: Venice, ASV, Procuratori di san Marco de Citra, b. 134.

Apresso ditta capella labbia ducati mille, zoe ducati mille d'imprestidi, de quelli de al p[rese]nte mi trovo alla cam[er]a d'imprestidi i qual voio in perpetuo, siano obligadi à quella, ne mai si possano permutar ne vender ne impegnar, ne altramente condizionar, I suo pro, galder de tempo in tempo, como pagherà la camera, redugando quelli a 3 p[er] c[ent]o, i qual subito i siano septi da poi el mancar mio à i ditti munexi de S[ant]o And[re]a habiano ducati diese, zoe dieci, accio i pregano Dio p[er] l'anima mia subito.

Alla scola de S Marco Lasso el mio razio grando sia suo in perpetuo, appresso i lazzo ducati 50, zoe cinquanta d'oro, i qual siano dispen sadi como parerà al guardian se atroverà in quel tempo p[er] anima mia, dove meio li parerà.

I beni mie stabeli [...] volio siano et pervegnano, in S And[re]a et S. Franc[esc]o Diedo, mei nevodi, q M Ant[oni]o et sui heredi.

Del tratto di rendedi di detti beni me aspeta p[er] la parte mia, voglio tutti siano dadi à mad[onn]a Chiara Diedo mia consorte, in vita soa [...]

Item che Mad^a Chiara sorella mia, habia oltra la sua dotta ducati duzent, quelli liberi siani sui, et dispensar come li piacerà, et tutti i suoi panni, et della mobilia de casa, li sia dado quello parerà ai comessarii, sia p[er] suo bisogno, galdando quelli in vitta soa, e mancando quella, tutti quelli voglio pervenghi in la detta mia comissaria, et tutto vender et comprar imprestidi, del tratto, et meter con i altri, et del pro di quelli dispensar per dio, come di altri dirò qui di sotto. I ducati duzent, zoe duzent, quelli liberi siano suo è dispensar como li parerà.

[...]

Questi viglio sia i mei legato passat de questa vitta subito siano dadi a S And[re]a Deido, et S Franc[esc]o mei nevodi q M Antonio di miei danari ducati mille d'oro p[er] cadaun di loro zoe ducati mille, siano suo liberi.

E p[er] dreto² diexemo ducati cento d'oro zoe ducati cento.

Item A poveri della mia contra, d[ucati] dodese doro.

² dreto = straightaway (Boerio).

Item A poveri e povere sta in S z[uan] novo ducati dodese d'esser despensadi p[er] i mei comissarii.

Item al mon[ast]er de S d[ome]nego de Castello ducati cinquenta d'oro, d'esser despensadi, como parerà al Prior s'atrova al'lora p[er] ben de quel luogo

Item al mon[aster]o de S Franc[esc]o della Vigna ducati dieci doro.

Item al mon[aster]o de S Z[uan] Pollo d[uca]ti diese doro.

Item al mon[aster]o del Corpus D[omi]ni d[ucat]i diese doro

Item a Sta. Maria di Anzoli de Mura[n] d[ucat]i diese d'oro

Item a S Bernardo de Mura[n] d[uca]ti diese doro

Item a S Piero martire de Muran d[ucat]i diese doro

Item a S Daniel d[uca]ti diese doro

Item a Sta. [Croce] della Zudeca ducati diese doro

Item a S Servolo d[uca]ti diese d'oro

Item a Sta Elena d[uca]ti diese d'oro

Item ali poveri de S Lazaro d[ucati] 5 doro

Item a Sta M[ari]a de Gratia d[ucati] Cinque doro

Item a Sto Martha d[ucat]i diexe d'oro

Item a S. Jeronimo d[uca]ti diese d'oro

Item a S. Alvixe d[uca]ti diese d'oro

Item a S Job d[ucat]i diese d'oro

Item a Sta Justina d[ucat]i 10 d'oro

Item alla Casa della pietade, sorà Canal d[ucat]i diese d'oro

Item a S Cristofolo de Muran d[uca]ti diese d'oro

Item a Sta Chiara de Muram (*sic*) d[ucat]i diese d'oro

A S Michiel de Muram ducati cinque d'oro,

Item a Sta Matthia de mura[n] ducati cinque d'oro

Item a Poveri presonieri p[er] liberarli ducati 50, zoe ducati cinquanta d'oro

[...]

Item tutto il mio mobele, come sonno arzenti lavoradi, et alcuni anelli, et zoiette, vestamente, si de seda como de panno, et tutte altre mie arnixie de casa, Voglio siano vendude fra el termine d'anni cinque, p[er] i detti mei comessarii, como à loro meglio pareria, mettendoli piu presto sarà possibile a fine, he del trato caveran[n]o de tempo in tempo, debino comprar tanti imp[re]sti, a mio nome et messi appresso i altri, me troverò

ad haver alia cam[er]a con le condictioni diete di sopra sempre remagnando quelli fermi in perpetuo , el pro di quali si debbia desperar como qui de soto sarà notade.

Et p[r]ima al mon[aster]o de S D[ome]nego de Castello ducati Cinque d'oro allanno.

Apresso la Capella n[ost]ra de S Maria de S[a]n And[re]a de Lido d[uca]ti dui doro all'anno d'esser dadi al Prior se trovera p[er] provvedere alla detta Capella di quello l'havera bisogno, et sora avanzando alcuna cosa, sianno spesi dove al detto parerà ben del mon[aster]o suo.

Item a Nadal ogn'anno quando s'averà el pro de detti mei imprestidi, siano vestidi poveri bisognosi dodexe, zoe 12, d'una vesta de panno beretin p[er] cadaun di loro, et habiad g[r]osi 6, zioe sie p[er] cadauno di quelli danari.

[There follow various donations to the poor 'pro anima mea'.]

[...]

Alla Cam[er]a d'imp[resti]di me resta oltra ducati mille dadi alla n[ost]ra Capella[,] £ 83: S 10 d 7 p?: Zoe – lire ottantatre soldi diexe g[r]ossi sete p[icol]lo de quella moneda, i qual se metano apresso de altri a 3 p[er] c[ent]o como lo ditti di sop[r]a et del pro dispensar como di altri detii di sop[r]a, et sel sovravegnisse piu denari di quello ordeno sia dispensado alli poveri et povere bisognose, come parerà i mei comissarii, i qual tutti mei lessi, et ordeni siano despensadi quando si haveran[n]o piu presto sarà possibile, et no[n] tagnir i danari in sacco.

Item p[er] nissum modo i detti mei danari, o p[er] alcun mai si possa navegar, ne marcadantar, ma sollo seguir quanto ordeno di sop[r]a. I denari p[er]vegnera de tempo in tempo appresso i mei comessarii; voglio sian[n]o et stian[n]o appresso de mad[onn]a Chiara mia Consorte, p[er] il tempo lassarà comessaria; d[e] denari me trovo sulì banchi e debitori p[er] il mio libro, tutto appar ordenadamente,

Ab extra + Jesus questo sono il mio Testamento de mi S D[ome]nego Diedo q S Z[uan] scritto de mia mano, in quest dì 29 marzo An[n]o 1465: In Venexia

Appendix 5

Extracts from the Account Book of Domenico Diedo¹

[137 r]

+ xhs Mcccccl[x]ii i[n] v[enexi]a

[...]

a di² p[r]imo Aprile 1463 , p[er] la chapella de santo Andrea de lido a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di 18 dito p[er] la chapella p[re]dita ave ell p[r]ior p[er] fabrichar a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di 17 mazo p[er] la chapella [con]tadi ave ell p[r]ior duc. 60 a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di 17 Zugno p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea ave el p[r]ior a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di 12 Luio p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea del lido....139 [....]

a di 20 dito p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea del lido... 139... [....]

a di 12 Auosto p[er] la chapella de sant[o] Andrea de lido....139....

[138 v]

+ xhs m cccc l[x]iii v[enexi]a

Chapella de Santo Andrea del lido fata in nome mio de mi Dom[ene]go Diedo in nome de madona santa maria de dare di p[r]imo Ap[r]ille p[e]r chassa [con]tadi all p[ri]or don Franc[es]co duc. 80 doro da[suma] Spexi p[er] quella mo[n]taa c[harta] 137 [...]

a di 18 dito p[er] chassa [con]tadi ave mis[er] el p[r]ior p[er] la chapella duc. 60 doro p[er] fabrichar quella mo[n]ta... a ch[arta] 137 [...]

a di 17 mazo p[er] chassa f[ur]ono [con]tadi a mis. ell prior in chaxa n[ost]ra duc. 60 doro val...a ch[arta] 137 [...]

a di 17 Zugno p[er] chassa [con]tadi a mis. el p[r]ior p[er] [uno] suo [con]vegno p[er] la chapella duc. 30 val a ch[arta] 137 [...]

a di 12 Luio p[er] chassa [con]tadi a mis. el p[r]ior p[er] [uno] suo [con]vegno p[er] la chapella duc. 40 doro val.... / a ch[arta] 137 [...]

¹ ASV, Proc di S Marco de Citra, b. 134. My thanks are due to Eduardo Giuffrida of the ASV for availing his paleographic expertise.

Items marked in bold (my emphasis) relate to the altarpiece commission.

Entries for some items reappear over several pages, with cross-references sometimes indicated by the phrase 'a charta.'. Recto and verso of each folio employed are similarly headed with the name of Jesus Christ, the year and Venice. The hand is very indistinct and some elements could not be satisfactorily transcribed. Square brackets indicate abbreviations as well as omissions in the transcription, including for illegible text and items of expenditure unrelated to the chapel.

² di = di

a di 20 dito p[er] chassa [con]tadi a mis. el p[r]ior p[er] mi dom[ene]go Diedo duc 30
dor[o] a ch[arta] 137 [...]

a di 12 Austo p[er] chassa [con]tadi a frate Paublo Zurego duc. 40 dor[o]...a ch[arta]
..137 [...]

a di 31 dito [= Austo 1463] p[er] cassa [con]tadi ave el maistro depenze l anchona
p[er] part[e] duc. 5 doro fo de pato dovese aver in tuto duc. 24 a ch[arta] 140 [...]

a di 27 set[e]mber p[er] chassa [con]tadi ave ell mastro taiapiera p[er] piet[ra] a ch[arta]
140[...]

a di dito [27 sept] ave Intaiador da rectortolli³ dela chapella p[er] resto a ch[arta] ... 140
[...]

a di 10 novembro p[er] chassa [con]tadi ave ell maistro dell anchona d[uc] 5 a
ch[arta]... 141

a di dito p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] tavolle 8 de larixe⁴ p[er] la porta.....141...

a di dito p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] la chrox e fixi doro p[er] ell parame[n]to in
S[umm]a mo[n]tano duc. xi ...val.... 141

a di 23 dito p[er] chassa [con]tadi p[er] resto al maistro taiapiera p[er] la salizeda⁵ p[er]
el he..ust..o(?) la gallizo in S[umm]a mo[n]ta duc 36/2 ... 141...

a di dito p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] piui spexe fate p[er] laltare meto in tut[t]o mo[n]tar
fin sto d[i] duc. 50 val ...a ch[arta] 141⁶

S[um]a £ xl vii S xiiii d[e] o o 16 [...]

[139 r]

+ xhs mccccL[x]iii v[enexi]a

[...]

Chapella de Santa Maria messa nel monasterio de Santo

Andrea de lido Alle(?)g[..]o de Aver di xi dezember 1463

p[er] resto parte avant de dover p[er] spexe de quella

fate. fin sto d[i] s[um]a mo[n]ta a ch[arta] 143⁷ £ XLVII SX IIII d....o/....16
[...]

³ Dott. Giuffrida suggested this indicated a woodcarver specialised in doing fancy, twisted pieces.

⁴ Larixe = larice (It.), larch wood

⁵ salizada or sallizada = pavement

⁶ The above entries on f. 138v are crossed through once diagonally.

⁷ This section of text is crossed through.

[140r]

+ xhs mcccclxiii venexia

a di 31 dito p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea de lido ch[arta] 139.....[...]

a di 21 dito [setembre] p[er] la chapella de Sant Andrea del Lido a ch[arta] 139

a di dito [21 settembre] p[er] la chapella dita al maestro i[n]taiador p[er] resto a ch[arta]
139⁸ [...]

[141 r]

+ xhs Mcccc L[x]iii Venexia

**Chassa de mia caxon de Avrea(?) alleg[.?(?)]o d[i] 10 november sono dadi [con]tadi
all maist[r]o fa lanchona p[er] part[e] duc. 5 doro a ch[arta] 139 [...]**

a di dito p[er] la chapella [con]tadi p[er] tavolle 8 dela verxa p[er] la po[r]ta a ch[arta]
139 [...]

a di 20 dito p[er] la chapella [con]tadi p[er] la chrox e fuxi doro p[er] la parame[n]to
dell alltare i[n] S[umma] mo[n]ta duc xi g..o 2 a ch[arta] 139[...]

a di 23 dito.p[er] la chapella p[er] resto ave ell maestro taiapiera p[er] la sallizada i[n]
S[umm]a mo[n]ta duc. 33 p[er] ell maist[r]o lasaro duc. 3 ..(?) 2 i[n] s[umm]a mo[n]ta
duc. 36 [cont]o val a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di [dito] [= 23] dito p[er] la chapella p[er] fornime[n]ti dela alltare in pui spexe in
s[umm]a mo[n]tano son qui duc 250 doro a ch[arta] 139 [...]

a di 3 dito [= marzo 1464] p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea del lido mo[n]to a ch[art]a
143 [...]

a dito [= 3 marzo 1464] p[er] p[er] (*sic*) lachapella dita mo[n]to a ch[arta] 143 [...]

a di 20 dito [marzo 1464] p[er] la chapella dita p[er] fornime[n]to dela porta a ch[arta]
143 [...]

a di " [dito = 4 Zugnio 1464] p[er] la chapella de s[ant]o Andrea dellido duc. 14 doro
a ch[arta] 143 [...]

a di 5 dito [= Zugnio 1464] p[er] la chapella dita p[er] spexe delaverare ed alter spexe
fate in suma mo[n]tano duc. 6 doro a ch[arta] 143 [...]⁹

⁸ This section of text is crossed through.

⁹ The above entries on f. 141r are crossed through.

[142 v]

Xhs mcccclxiii venexia

Chapella nominada Santa Maria messa nel monastero de Santo Andrea del lido de dover
di xi dezerber 1463/ p[er] la mo[n]tar de quella fin sto d[i] in Summa mo[n]tano chome
apar. A dietro a ch[arta] 139 .£ XLVII S XIII d....o 16

a di 3 marzo [= 1464] p[er] chassa [con]tadi p[er] tavolla dela verxa p[er] la porta e
p[er] maistranza del marango[n] la lavoro i[n] s[umm]a mo[n]ta ch[arta] 141 [...]

a di [3] dito p[er] chassa [con]tadi ave l intaiador fexe la porta ...ach[arta] 141...[...]

a di 20 dito p[er] chassa [con]tadi p[er] fornime[n]ti della porta duc. do val a
ch[arta]....141 [....]

a di 4 zugnio [= 1464] p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] resto della palla duc. 14 doro
ch[arta] 141 £ I S viii d...o....

a di 5 dito p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] spexe dellarmar i feri chortina a ch[arta]141
[...]

a di 30 dito p[er] chassa sano p[er] depenzer la chortina e [con]zar la palla all
alltar.

mo[n]to a ch[arta] 145 £ S ii d o.....

a di 5 febrareo p[er] chassa f[ur]ono p[er] [un]o zexendello de laton..... 145....

a di p[rim]o Marzo 1465, p[er] piui spexe fat[e] fin sto di mo[n]ta... 145

a di 12 dezerber p[er] chassa fano p[er] hollio ed alter spexe ... 148 [...]

[145 r]

+ xhs Mcccc L[x]iiii

a di 30 dito [zugnio] p[er] al chapella de Santo Andrea del Lido a ch[arta] 143 [...]

a di [dito] [= 5 febrario] p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea a ch[arta] 143 [...]

a di [dito] [= 1 marzo 1465] p[er] la chapella de santo Andrea p[er] algune spexe in
quella fin sto d[i] mo[n]ta a ch[arta] 143 [...]

[148 r]

+ xhs mcccc L[x]v i[n] venexia

a di dezerbre p[er] la chapella de Santo Andrea de Lido a ch[arta] 143 [....]

Appendix 6

The Will of Domenico Dolfin (1494, abridged)¹

[...]

Jesus 1494: adi 27 marzo. In venexia

Considerando io Domenego Dolfin quondam messer Dolphin niuna cosa esserendo piu certa della morte, et niuna piu incerta del tempo, et hora, et el modo di quella, e perho essendo conveniente a chadauno ingenuo non solum star disposto, circha al anima la qual quando l hora sia, al suo factor ricommando: la grazia del qual come dator dogni ben priego, per sua infinita benignitta li concieda, et ogni demerito perdoni, per merito, de la sua pientissima passione. Ma volendo anche che i beni temporali siano disposti secondo la rason, libero arbitrio e voler mio: Pero voglio questa scriptur sia testamento et in luogo di testamento; per el qual dechiarisco lultima mia volonta essere questa.

E prima voglio et ordino che i mie commissarii siano i magnifici Procuratori di san Marco di qua da canal: et appresso el Reverendo piovàn de S Lio che al presente se atrova. Item Messer Andrea Mocenigo fo di Messer Aluixe, Messer Anzolo Barrozi fo di Messer Aluvixe fo di Reverendissimo vescovo de Padua e Messer Francesco Venier fo di Messer Aluixe da Riva de Biagio. Aiquali strectissimamente, li recomando el cargo, della mia commessaria, e sopra lanime sue glimpono, la defension de essa, et la exegution, de i legati. Havendo per ricomandati mie fioli qui soto, da esser nominadi, ut infra et cetera.

[In the SS Giovanni e Paolo version, at the side of the following paragraph is a marginal note in a different hand: 'Sepolto a S. Gio: e Paulo e sia fatta sepultura all'altar di S Augustino']

Prima voglio et ordino che renduta sara l anima al onnipotente, el corpo mio sia sepelido in la giesia di S. Zuanepolo al altar di S. Agostino, dentro dala porta a banda senestra, che e quel ha le do arme da cha Dolphin, nel qual, dove zapa el frate quando el dice messa, intendo sia facta, una sepoltura dove habi a esser posto el corpo mio: Il qual mio corpo, voglio ivi sepelito sia se a dio piacera, con quella cerimonia, e quella convenientia che al grado mio, a laude dell'omnipotente, sia condegna: e che per 3

¹ ASV, Procuratori di S. Marco de Citra, b. 319. Copies also found at: ASV, SS Giovanni e Paolo, b. D, fasc. XIII; Scuola Grande di San Marco, b. 11. Original and *protocollo* versions at: ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 1183, no. 150 (I was unable to check this version as it was unavailable at the time of writing), and 1185, 7v.

zorni dapoi la mia separation, de l anima dal corpo sia facto quelle elemosine conventiente, dove e come a sopradicti comissarii parerano, con le messe de nostra dona, S. Gregorio, et altre, per l anima di morti triplicate.

Item sia da, pro el maridor de una povera noviza ducati 10.

Tutte queste spexe de sepultura, archa e questo, e sopraditto, in summa, non voglio passina ducati cento, zoe 100.

Lasso ch'el sia da al monestier, di S. Chiara, di Muran, dove e nostra suor Davia, quel el dicto monestier, die haver, per la ratta, e portion mia come e debito, pro la elimosina, fo promessa per la dicta suor Davia.

Item voglio che dala mia comissaria ogni anno, alla sopradicta suor Davia, sia da, in quelle cose, saranno piu expediente pro el suo vivier, ducati tre, al'anno, e questo sia si per fraternal benivolentia, come per elemosina, et acio, la prieghi dio per la remission de i peccati mie.

Item lasso, per l'anima mia ducati trexento doro, i quali voglio siano messi dove parerano, a mie comissarii, chel fondi habi, a essere fermo, e perpetuo. La utilita, del qual, voglio sia data a uno frate di S. Zuane polo sopradicto. Il qual intendo, sia persona catholica, costumada e sopra tutto de i piu docti siano del dicto monestier. La intarada et provento di qual, ducati 300 voglio sia del dicto sacerdote.

Il qual voglio sia obligato de dir ogni settimana messe 3 ad honorem Dei, per l anima mia, e de i mie morti. Il qual beneficio, non meno intendo, lo lhabi, per dir le messe, cha per haver co'modo, di studiar, et farse valente theologo defensore dela fede catholica, o eccellente predicatore, cha per le messe preditte ad honorem Dei, ne le qual tre, ne sia una, di nostra dona avvocata di miseri peccatori. [...]

Tutto el mio residuo, lasso e voglio sia, di mie fioli naturali, zoe, di Zuane et Marco equalmente, essendo, o non essendo, i dicti mie fioli, si el stabele come el mobele, et ogni cosa mi trovasse post mortem e de ogni ben, mi pervegnisse quo modo cumque, cum questa condition qui sotto annotada che i dicti voglio, dessi, tanto siano, usufructuarii fin viveranno: e manchando l uno, vadi in l altro: e manchadi tutti do, voglio dicti beni vadino in uno di i fioli di mie fradelli, qual parera esser piu condegno, per virtu, scientia, e benemerito verso la patria aut indole, et spe futuri boni si non habebunt etatem, e non possi esser diviso, tal lasso, ma in uno solo sempre voglio

pervegna. Post mortem, del qual, in uno voglio, pervengna ut supra, de i fioli, e descendenti dei sopradicti mie fratelli, e manchando tutti i fioli e descendendi di mie fratelli, voglio tal lasso vadi intro i fioli e descendenti di mie cusini, messer Lorenzo e Francesco Dolfìn quondam Messer Zuane, e manchando i dicti, voglio vadino ut supra in quelli da Cha Dolfìn da Iere (?) e manchando quelli da l altri da uno, e manchando tutti quelli da Cha Dolfìn, quod Deus avertat, in uno di quelli, da Cha Gradenigo, dove se dice, et pare, noi habiamo havuto origine. Et manchando quelli, che dio non el permetti vadi in uno zentilhomo, i usufructi in sua vita, che elezi qual che eccellente scientia ala nobilita, e da lui, a un altro successive quo mundus erit: Et perche, di sopra ho dechiarito la forma del legatto, conveniente, e che dechiarischa el modo, dela electione. La qual de tempo, in tempo voglio sia, da essa facta per la bancha, per el consiglio, da essa facta, de quelli dela Scuola di S. Marco zurandi sopra le sue conscientie, di far condegna electione.

Item del legato dicto de sopra, de i ducati 300 etcetera el sacerdote de tal legatto, voglio sia electo per i sopradicti dela Scuola de S. Marco, per la bancha, di anni 3 zoe tre, in 3, o confirmando, ut supra. voglio sia in liberta di i sopradicti dela scuola grande alcun havesse tal mio lasso e non pagasse le angarie dela terra, tuor el dicto, da quel tal, per quel tempo li paresse, si per poder pagar, dicte angarie, come di confieri li achadesse, e reintegratione. Dechiarando che se per alcun tempo paresse, transmudar per beneficio della commissaria, alcun fondo, del mio stabele, lassasse, in altro fondo, per piu beneficio, son contento che far lo possino, per via de gratia della nostra Illustrissima S. Male possession e beni mobeli di terra ferma non voglio sua permutado, per alcun mezo.

Item, voglio che tutti i contadi superabundasse al mio ultimo zorno, pagati i debiti e legati, siano messi in tante possession, o caxe da sazieri, come meglio a comissarii paresse, e cosi del mobile debitori et tutto sempre, con le condition dicte di sopra obligati. Le possession da Codevigo, aquistate, per me con gran spexa, e fatica, siano ut supra conditionate quale mai voglio permutar, se possino. E questo mio testamento, et ultima voluntade ho facto io Domenego Dolfìn predicto sana de la mente e in debita dispositione, cassando ogni scriptura che per havesse facto volendo questo inviolabilmente rimanga ferma e valida.

[a codicil of 1495 mainly concerns the liberation of Dolfìn's two slaves] [...]

Appendix 7

*The Will of Piero Corner (1473, abridged)*¹

[...]

Io Piero Corner predito azo che p[er] i casi puono occorer le mie cosse da puo la mia morte no[n] rimangano desordenade voio che q[ue]sta sia el mio tes[timent]o, p[er] el qual voio et ordeno che mie comiss[ar]ii siano mis[er] Zuanfrancescho Bragadin mio nevodo, Zuane et B[e]n[e]deto Corner mie nevodi, li qual mie Comessarii p[re]go che dapuo la mia morte fazino star el mio corpo sopra terra tanto chel se possi haver ogni forma certeza de la mia morte, Et da poy fazino portar quello a San Michel de Muran ve la sepoltura la qual ho fato far p[er] mia moier et p[er] mi. Senza alchuna pompa ma solamente con i preti e Zagi de la [con]tra de San Lucha Et con do deputi de Casa Cornaria et no[n]b..(?) cha che no[n] passino el peso de tre luno. E sia cop[er]to dito mio corpo tuto de tollavegia,² Et voio chel sia pregado ch' el guardian et [com]pagni ufficiali de la Schuola Mis[er] San Marco ne la qual Io son, che no[n] se fadigano, ne facino fadigar la schuola i[n] aco[m]pagnar el mio corpo ala sepoltura, Ma che la prima volta che i se [con]gregano i[n]sieme, el dito guardian et [com]pagni voino pregar tuti ifrad[e]li che nela salla de la dita schuolla davanti laltare de miser San Marco voino pregar devotame[n]te dio p[er] lanema mia, digando³ inzenochioni uno paternostro et una avemaria. Et con tal [con]diti[one] lasso ala dita schuola ducati qui[n]dexe. I qual siano desspensadi p[er] el guardian et [com]pagni ne i pov[e]ri de quella. Et al dito monastier de San Michiel de Muran lasso per lanema mia ducati diexe, lasso anchora al piovàn de la mia [con]tra de San Luca ducati diexe. Iqual lui habia a partir con li preti et zagi de la dita [con]tra che averano co[m]pagnado el mio corpo ala sepoltura, come li parera.

[...]

Item voio che li diano ale munege de Sancta Croxe de la Zudecha ducati quatro; ale munege de S[an]to Andrea de Zira ducati sie; Ale munege de Santa Chiara de Muran ducati quatro; Ali poveri de Santa Agnexe iqual se chiamano Iesuati ducati oto; Ali puti de la Pieta ducati quatro; Ali poveri prixoneri ducati quatro; a lospedal de Lazareto ducati, do. Iqual danari tuti siano dati, o fati dar, p[er] li diti miser Zuanfrancescho et Madona

¹ ASV, sez. not., testamenti, b. 479 114v-116r also *ibid.*, b. 482, no. 768, the latter has been used as the basis of the transcription below.

² vegia = vigil

³ digando = dicendo (Boerio)

Ixabeta mia cugnada, de la dita suma de ducati setecento, de l'qual itia[m]In(?)e possi spender i[n] far dir messe p[er] lanema mia, quanti alor parera.

Voio anchora che diano o fazino dar a tuti i monasteri de obs[er]vanza se de frati come de munege de questa terra e de Muran oltra i nominadi de sopra ducati do p[er] chadauno i qual siano pur de la suma de iditi ducati setecento. Non Intendendo i[n] q[ue]sto numero Abbatie riche p[er]che queste no[n] hano bixogno de elimoxine. El resto veramente de i diti ducati setecento, voio che sia i[n] liberta de li diti mis[er] Zanfranescho mio nevodo et madona Ixabeta mia cugnada de dispensarli p[er] lanema mia come alor parera senza esser tagnudi de render de li diti danari raxon ne [con]to ad alchuna p[er]sona.

[...]

Anchora volgio et lasso [...] ducati sete cento [...] a tute mie neze si a quele fo fie del q[uondam] mio fradelo mis[er] Ferigo, come quele che fo fie del q[uondam] mio fradelo mis[er] Fantin, si maridade come donzele, ducati Cinqua[n]ta doro p[er] cadauna, i[n] segno damor [...]

El Residuo veramente de tuti li mie beni i mobili et stabili chaduchi desordenad[i] et pro no[n] seruti che me aspeta et che p[er] ogni modo me podesse aspitar lasso amie nevodi zoe Zuane, Benedito, Marco, F[e]rigo, Jeronimo et Francescho li quali tuti mie nivodi nominadi eugualmente et senza alchuna differenza voio che habiano diti mie beni.

[...]

Et e da notar che al tempo de mis[er] F[e]rigo Comer mio avo, el vene i[n] q[ue]sta terra un Re, de Cipro, che se chiamava re, pero el qual habiando ricevudo dal dito mio avo e frad[e]li comodi et honori assai vorando sia M[..]ta i[n] segno de gratitudine beneficiar el dito mio avo et do so frad[e]dli et un fiol del dito mio avo che l'ave i[n] quel tempo i chadauno de i diti ass[e]gno i[n] feudo besanti mille al ano sopra un casal i[n] Cypri, el qual se chiama el Morfo come ap[ar] p[er] i privilegi de i diti quatro pheudi. E ben che mio padre p[er] el so tes[tamen]to ordenasse et volesse che tuti tre nui frad[e]li vegniseno a possession de tuti li so beni eugualme[n]te. Nostro frad[e]llo Mis[er] Ferigo non [con]tento de q[ue]sto, p[er] iusto gatione de alchuni [,] che a qualche fine cerchava la division et discordia de nui frad[e]li, disse che l'intendeva et voleva esser manu(?)tuzado da nui de tuti quatro i feudi del Morfo, i qual a lui el dixevaspetar p[er] esser el primo genito. Et parendo a mio fradel Fantin et a mi q[ue]sta cossa molto nova et strana(?) strana che abiandose apagar diti quatro feudi sopra el casal dela Piscopia, et no[n] piu sopra el caxal del Morfo, no[n] voleva riferir, ne significar altro. Se no che un solo de nuy frad[e]li havesse tuta la utilita de dita Pys[c]opia senza alcuna spexa, fatica, ne pericolo. Et i altri

sotozusesse ale spexe, fadige et p[er]icoli senza alguna utilita, maxime siando redute le cosse de la Pis[c]opia nel tramene et [con]dito[n] che laseno, p[er] tanto nui ogni diligentia cercaseno de Iure.. de la verita de q[ue]sta cossa. Et fosseno certificadi p[er] i principal cavalieri de Cypri et intelligenti dele leze et [con]suetudine de quel segno che qua[n]do lie(?)ra un feudo solo p[er] alchun modo el no[n] se podua partir⁴, ma ch[e] el co[n]vegniva andar de primo genito in primo genito, ma qua[n]do i erano piu feudi, e fosseno piu frad[e]li el primo frad[e]llo, zoe el primo genito doveva elezer el primo feudo, e i altri frad[e]li poi subseque[n]temente p[er] ordine secondo la etade.

[...]

[Here the testator continued with a very detailed explanation regarding the inheritance of the four Cyprus estates between himself and his two brothers, with the first born Ferigo, inheriting two estates, and Piero and Fantin one each.]

E p[er]o exorto e p[re]go Bened[e]to mio nevodo che vogi star [con]tento et havendo do de diti feudi, E che Zuane so cusin e fradeli habiano i altri do feudi come veramente tegno che voia raxo[n] et honesta. Ma azo che el dito Benedeto habia raxo[n] de contentar piu p[re]sto ale mie exorhortatio[n] et priegi i quali li fazo cusi p[er] usole e ben sio, come de so cusini, Lasso al dito Benedeto oltra la sexta p[ar]te del mio residuo come ho dito de sopra, la mia casa de la Zud[e]cha da poi la morte del dito mis[er] Zuanfrancesco Bragadin la qual voio sa soa et de so heredi mas[c]oli, Et la mita de tute massarie arzenti razi veste et amexe mie, no[n] I... dando danari. Et laltra mita ali diti mie nevodi zoe Zuane, Marco, F[e]rigo, Ieronimo et Francescho, la qual mita del dito Benedeto mio nevodo voio siano stimada et fato nota dela stima, zoe de la valuta de esse mita, et a quel sia data p[er] dita stima, ma senza pagam[en]to. Et con [con]ditio[n] chel dito B[e]n[e]dito debia contentar et con effeto assentar che i feudi de Cipri siano partidi come de sopra ho dito, zoe che lui habia besanti do millia, et laltri so cusini altri besanti do millia al ano. Et p[re]gone segunta ali altri mie nevodi, so cusini de no[n] li molestar mai, ni dimandar alcuna cossa p[er] raxo[n] de diti feudi. Et pro meter alor, et a.suo heredi et desenduti che esso ne suo heredi ne desenduti, in p[er]p[etuu]m no[n] molestano ne litte alguna farano ne moverano ali diti mie nevodi in alio her[e]d[i] ne desenduti in p[er]p[etuum] de diti feudi ne de alcun de essi ne de usifruti et .r...de essi feudi ne de alcuno dessi si p[er] el q[uondam] mio padre come p[er] cadauno altro qo.n..z; Che s[e] el no[n] vora contentar et con effeto assentar, et pregar dita segunta et promiter ut supra, ma p[er] caxo[n] de diti feudi et dependuti da essi

⁴ i.e. divide the holding

lui over suo hered[i] et desenduti vole suo molestar d[i]t[i] mie nevodi so cusini et suo heredi et desendenti in p[er]p[etuu]m.

Tunc voio el sa et sano punodo et privad[i] de la sexta p[ar]te del mio terzo de la Piscopia Et de altri tereni che nui avev[an]o i[n] Cypri, et de la casa de la Zudecha over de la valuda desse, et de tanto qua[n]to sia sta stimad[a] la p[ar]te de arzenti razi veste arnise et massarie che desopra al dito B[e]n[e]deto lasso. Et tunc voio che tute dite cosse p[er]vegna et p[er]vegnir del avo eugualme[n]te ali altri mie nevod[i] nominadi over i[n] suo h[er]edi et desenduti mas[c]oli. Voio itia[m] che se Zuane, o Bened[e]to mie nevodi se maridar i[n] alguna fiola de algun cavalir de questa terra senz[a] colui, che q[ue]sto fara sia privado de la mia heredita et di ogni mio lasso la p[ar]te del qual, zoe de dita heredita et las[o] p[er]venga ne li altri mie nevodi et suo heredi mascoli eugualmente co la [con]ditio[n] dita de sopra. Ma se Zuane et Bened[e]to diti trovaseno al so maridar do sorele fiole de alcun chavalir, possono d[e]lle aver una p[er] uno, et fazando p[er] loro son [con]tento che i le possano tuor senza alcuno suo preiuditio et se[n]za la dita pun[i]tio[n] pur che i le toia tute do i[n]sieme. Et q[ue]sti punti con q[ues]te conditio[ni] meto no[n] p[er] altro rason, ne p[er] usar p[er] r(?)elita alchuna tra diti mie nevodi, i qual dio me sia testimonio che i amo eugualmente tuti come mie p[ro]prii et carissimi fioli, ma solo azo che i abiano rason de viver i[n] paze et i[n] concordia i[n]sieme, senza alguno turbatio[n], p[er]che io cognoso che ala condizion[e] che fano niuna cossa li puo esser piu utile che la *concordia, ne alcuna cossa piu nociva che la discordia.*

Item voio che B[e]n[e]dito mio nevodo noti tute le spexe ch[e] io ho fate p[er] lui e p[er] so sorele, dapuo la morte de so padre, si quale che sono notade de mia man[o] sopra neli quaderneti, e p[ar]te summariamente conze nel libro de la comissaria de mio padre. [...]

[The following passage only was copied into the Frari records:] ⁵ Voio oltra ad zo che se la capella nostra da li frar minori no[n] stia co[m]pida avanti la mia morte i detti mie heredi e nevodi siano tegnudi de farla [com]pir de lbeni de la comessaria de mio padre ben, et [con]venientemente de ogni cossa necessaria et cusi qua[n]to piu strettamente posso li prego che debino fare p[er] suo honor et debito; Ma se l'occorrese, che nol credo che p[er] neglegentia de iditi mie nevodi el passese uno an[n]o e mezo⁶ da poi la mia morte che dita capella [con]venientemente no[n] fosse [com]pida, voio chel sta⁷ i[n] liberta et podesta de

⁵ At ASV, Frari, b. 129.

⁶ copy = 'anno intrego'

⁷ copy = 'sia'

quelo, o quei, che siano p[ro]curatori de la giesa de Santa Maria de Frar Menorj de
strenzar⁸ d[i]ti mie nevodi p[er] vigor de q[ue]sto mio testamento a compirla
convenientemente de tute cosse necessarie azo che i[n] quella se posse ogni di celebrare⁹
do messe, come i frari son tegnudi de dir p[er] idanari i qual zu¹⁰ gran tempo li sono sta
scriti ala camera de Imp[re]stidi de i qual i sto drio el pro¹¹ [...]

⁸ copy = 'astrenzer'

⁹ copy = 'dir'

¹⁰ copy = '20'

¹¹ copy = 'scuodeno i Pro'

Appendix 8

Frames and Frame-makers

The following table briefly describes the surviving or recorded frames of Vivarini altarpieces made from the 1440s to the end of Bartolomeo's career. Frames and documents relating to frame-makers are listed in chronological order. This table is not intended as a comprehensive catalogue and fuller bibliographies may be found in the cited sources.

1441 *St Jerome Altarpiece*, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The inscription ascribed the lost frame to Gasparo Moranzzone.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 96, cat. 6; Holgate (1999), pp. 131-32 and *idem*. (2001), p. 19.

1443 *Madonna of the Rosary Polyptych*, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna (fig. 0.03)

S. Zaccaria, Venice

The frame is inscribed to Lodovico da Forlì

A very elaborate and dynamic double-sided gothic polyptych over three orders comprising painted panels and carved saints in niches. The central section is surmounted by a carved Man of Sorrows set in an elaborate tabernacle; substantial flanking piers are surmounted by an Annunciation; between these, pinnacles are alternated with tall gables with foliate crockets upon which are set prophets with banderoles; prophets also appear in the flowing vegetal carving which flanks the altarpiece. The predella comprises flowing tracery; aperture arches are ogee.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 100, cat. 32-35; Holgate (1999), pp. 161-62.

1443 *St Sabina Polyptych*, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna
(fig. 0.02)

S. Zaccaria, Venice

The carving is attributed to Lodovico da Forlì

Prophets emerge from pinnacles, some of which are carved in the base in gothic

tabernacle forms. Pilasters are multifaceted with elaborate lancet tracery; wide ogee arches; short fleshy foliate crockets.

Pallucchini (1962) p. 99, cat. 27-30; Holgate (1999), p. 161.

1443 *Redeemer Polyptych*, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna (fig. 0.04)

S. Zaccaria, Venice

The carving is attributed to Lodovico da Forlì

The central section of the lower tier comprises a carved Man of Sorrows with a mourning figure group set above it; the central section of the upper tier comprises a carved Resurrection. Other features include: stepped gables; elaborate flowing circular tracery over the predella; spindly pinnacles; multifaceted piers with elaborate lancet tracery; short fleshy foliate crockets. The apertures of the lower order have widely splayed ogee arches.

Pallucchini (1962) pp. 99-100, cat. 31; Holgate (1999), pp. 161-62.

1444 *Coronation of the Virgin*, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna
San Pantalon, Venice

The inscription on the panel records the altarpiece frame (mainly lost) was made by Cristoforo da Ferrara.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 102, cat. 44; Gilbert (1977), p. 19; Holgate (1999), pp. 185-96; *idem.* (2003b), pp. 86-88.

1446, Altarpiece in SS Cosma e Damiano, Venice, Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna

The frame of the lost altarpiece (subject and form unknown) was probably inscribed by Cristoforo da Ferrara whose name was noted in 1581 by Sansovino (1998), p. 254: 'una palla posta a man destra nel mezzo d'essa [chiesa]: & fu dipinta l'anno 1446. da i Vivarini. & l'ornamento d'intaglio fu fatto da Christoforo Ferrarese.'

1447 *Nativity Polyptych*, Antonio Viavrini and Giovanni d'Alegmagna (fig. 0.05)
National Gallery, Prague

The frame is inscribed to Cristoforo da Ferrara

The frame has been largely reconstructed. Foliate crockets are elongated and

finished in open flowers. Pilasters between the central panel and side panels are surmounted by pyramidal finials. Apertures comprise wide gothic arches with wide-angled ogee gables finished in fleur-de-lys finials. Humfrey (1993), p. 331, n. 3, noted the same carver was also responsible for the lost frame of Jacobello del Fiore's *Coronation of the Virgin* (1438, Academia, Venice).

1450 *Certosa Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.01)

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna

Frame, anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

The frame has some similar detailing to the San Zaccaria altarpieces. Prophets emerge from spindly pinnacles; pinnacles emerge from the pilasters; some pinnacles include tabernacle forms at their base; the whole altarpiece is surmounted by a carved figure of God the Father. The carving of the stepped gables, from which emerge feathery foliate and floral motifs, is very intricate. The centre of the upper tier comprises a canopy-like structure with three painted panels. Humfrey (1993), p. 163, attributed the frame to Cristoforo da Ferrara. See appendix 2 here for further bibliography.

1452 *Annunciation with Saints Augustine and Filippo Benizzi*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini

Fondazione Cagnola, Gazzada

Frame, unknown woodcarver – Francesco Moranzzone (?)

The central section of the altarpiece features a carved annunciation. The intricate tracery over slender pilasters and predella and the cusped form of the gables is close to the equivalent elements of the 1458 *Arbe Polyptych*, the carving of which was inscribed to a certain Francesco (see below). The much cruder, bolder carving of the crockets and pinnacles of the 1452 frame is not original. See appendix 2 here for bibliography.

1452 Antonio Vivarini witnessed a will together with woodcarver Jacopo de Marco Nicolai who also lived in the parish of S. Maria Formosa, and a painter associate, Leonardo Boldrin. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 262 n. 29.

1453 Antonio Vivarini witnessed a will with woodcarver Lodovico da Forlì, also of the parish of Santa Maria Formosa. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), p. 260, n. 26.

1458 *Arbe Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini

S. Eufemia, Arbe (Rab), Dalmatia.

Frame - Francesco Moranzzone (?) Griffiths (1976), p. 19, suggested the carver's identity from the inscription, as transcribed by Brusić, which included the words: 'FRANCISUS INCISIT', although the frame shares many features with that of the Prague *Nativity* by Cristoforo Ferrara. It comprises elongated foliate crockets finished in open flowers; pyramidal finials surmounting the pilasters between central panel and side panels, and the flanking pilasters; and wide gothic arches with wide-angled ogee gables which are finished in fleur-de-lys finials.

See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1464 *Pesaro Polyptych*, Antonio Vivarini (fig. 2.12)

Frame, anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

The central section of the lower tier comprises a wooden carving of Anthony Abbot; a canopy is set over the Man of Sorrows in the upper tier. Other features include prophets with banderols which spring as short pinnacles from foliage; fleshy foliate crockets; stepped gables; multi-faceted gothic pilasters with intricate tracery; the predella is also decorated with tracery.

Pallucchini (1962) p. 112, cat. 110; Humfrey (1993), p. 342, cat. 6.

1464 *Osimo Polyptych*, Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.13)

Pinacoteca Civica, Osimo.

Frame, anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

The frame has been subject to losses, including crockets, pinnacles and flanking piers. It comprises gothic pilasters with intricate tracery, often in the form of gothic lancets, topped by turret-like finials. A hemispherical motif protrudes from the gables, a feature found also on the *St Mark Triptych* and *Zumpano Triptych*. The predella comprises elaborate flowing tracery. The canopy form of the central section of the upper tier resembles that of the Bologna *Certosa Polyptych*.

See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1464 *Polyptych of the Madonna*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 1.02)

Accademia, Venice.

Frame, anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

The frame was recorded in an engraving commissioned by Sasso. Prophets with banderols emerge as short pinnacles from foliage; fleshy foliate crockets spring from trefoil gables; gothic pilasters are multi-faceted with a lancet motif; spindly pinnacles emerge from the pilasters, a similar feature to that of the 1450 *Certosa Polyptych*. The predella comprises elaborate flowing tracery and includes motifs similar to the *Osimo Polyptych*.

See chapter 1.

1466 Lodovico da Forlì witnessed the will of Cristina who lived in Antonio's house. Paoletti and Ludwig (1899), pp. 264-65 n. 34; Griffiths (1976), p. 6 and p. 38 n. 13.

1474 *St Mark Triptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 3.01)

Frari, Venice

Frame, anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

Prophets with banderols emerge as short pinnacles from foliage; fleshy foliate crockets emerging from gables and sides; trefoil gables; polygonal gothic pilasters with lancet tracery. The flanking piers are topped with turret-like finials. The predella comprises elaborate flowing tracery, which includes a motif of intersecting circles also found on the *Osimo Polyptych*. Certain details recall the 1443 *Redeemer Polyptych*, including the wide ogee apertures and the form of the gables.

See chapter 3.

1475 *Conversano Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 4.04)

Accademia, Venice.

Frame, unknown carver (author of the frame of the *Morano Calabro Polyptych*?).

The gothic frame was evidently very elaborate, although it has been subject to significant losses including flanking piers, and all decorations protruding from the top and sides. The remains of a canopy-like structure is set over the central section. The format of the predella, with painted half-figures of saints, resembles that of the *Morano Calabro* altarpiece, also made for southern Italy; a number of minor motifs are very close to those appearing on the frame of the latter work, which indicates the same carver was employed on both.

See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1476 *Bari Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 0.15)

Frame, unknown carver.

In its present condition the frame is quite unlike other surviving Vivarini frames; it appears severely classicising, with fluted square pilasters, capitals framed with acanthus, and dentil moulding on the lunette and architrave. The frame was subject to significant intervention in the eighteenth century and may have originally appeared more elaborately decorated and Lombardesque in style. See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1476 *Montefiorentino Polyptych*, Alvise Vivarini (fig. 1.11)

Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino

Frame anonymous – Lodovico da Forlì (?)

The frame has suffered significant losses, including flanking piers, pinnacles, crockets. It comprises multi-faceted gothic pilasters with a lancet motif; the predella is decorated with tracery with a design of intersecting circles. Certain details, including the form of the crockets, resemble those of the 1450 *Certosa Polyptych*; the canopy set over the central figure of the Virgin resembles that over the Man of Sorrows in Antonio's *Pesaro Polyptych*.

J. Steer (1982), pp. 6-12; Humfrey (1993), p. 346, cat. 22.

1477 *St Ambrose Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 5.02)

Accademia, Venice

The inscription on the altarpiece panels recorded the frame was made by Jacopo da Faenza

In the nineteenth century the renaissance-style frame was heavily restored, or replaced with some features similar to the original. Flat pilasters are adorned with symmetrical foliate reliefs rising from classicising vases; the entablature frieze comprises a bolder, scrolling decoration and the predella is decorated with symmetrical designs; spandrels comprise radiating leaves; apertures are round-arched.

See chapter 5 here.

1477 *Morano Calabro Polyptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop

Frame, unknown carver (author of the frame of the *Conversano Polyptych*?)

Unusually, the predella includes an arcade of half-figures of saints; the turret-like finials and elaborately traced pilasters recall the frame of the *St Mark Triptych*; in place of gables and pinnacles, a scrolling foliate motif appears over the main painted panels; large *putti* are set over the smaller panels which flank the polyptych. Most of the minor panels are set in apertures with ogee arches, the main panels are round-arched.

See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1478 *Bragora Triptych*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 5.17)

Frame, Jacopo da Faenza (?)

See chapter 5 here.

1480 *Zumpano Triptych*, mainly workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini

S. Giorgio, Zumpano, S. Italy

Frame, unknown carver, author of the frame of the 1485 *Arbe Polyptych* (?)

The gothic frame comprises ogee arches, stepped gables with elaborate tracery and fleshy foliate crockets, the upper section is very similar to that of the *Arbe Polyptych* and certain features recall the frame of the *St Mark Triptych*.

See appendix 2 for bibliography.

1482 *Ca' Bernardo Altarpiece*, Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 7.01)

Frari, Venice

Frame attributed to Jacopo da Faenza.

The frame is Lombardesque in style; its flat pilasters are decorated in *bas-relief* with foliage springing from amphora-like vases and have composite capitals. The entablature is decorated with a scrolling organic motif springing from a central vase and the entablature cornice comprises egg-and-dart and dentil moulding.

The predella is decorated with a foliate relief. A pair of angels is set over the side panels, although these may have been added later.

See chapters 5 and 7 here.

1483(?) *Man of Sorrows*, workshop of Bartolomeo Vivarini (fig. 5.16)

Private Collection, Bergamo, formerly Lazzaroni Collection, Rome

Frame, Jacopo da Faenza (?)

The panel formed the *cimasa* of a polyptych. It is framed by a round arch with

spandrels resembling those on the *St Ambrose*, *Bragora* and *Bernardo* altarpieces (1477, 1478 and 1482 respectively). Published by Pallucchini (1967). Contrary to Griffiths (1976), it is argued in chapter 5 that this panel cannot be associated with the *Bragora* altarpiece. See Zeri (1988), pp. 164-65, for a possible link to the *Andria Altarpiece*.

1484 *Dormition of the Virgin*, Bartolomeo Vivarini and workshop (fig. 8.01)

Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Frame lost, unknown woodcarver.

The carver was to be subcontracted by Bartolomeo. The commissioners stipulated a carved figure of St Michael at the apex of the altarpiece.

See concluding chapter and appendix 9.

1485 *Arbe Polyptych (II)*, Bartolomeo and workshop (fig. 6.11)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Frame, unknown woodcarver, author of the frame of the *Zumpano Triptych* (?)

The central section of the lower tier comprises a carved *pietà*; the gothic frame is carved boldly (restored?), and features traced gables, fleshy crockets and hemispherical motifs on the gables recall elements of the *St Mark Triptych*; the upper section is very close to the *Zumpano Triptych*; aperture arches are wide, cusped ogees.

Pallucchini (1962), p. 127, cat. 201; Griffiths (1976) p. 19.

Appendix 9

The Contract for the *Dormition of the Virgin* (1484, Metropolitan Museum, New York)

Source: P. Sambin (1964) pp. 41-42, doc. 14, (Archivio di Stato di Padova, archivio notarile, vol. 611, f. 166).

PROMISSIO ET CONVENTIO

MCCCCLXXXIII, indictione II, die lune XV martii, in Porcilia in cella domini vicarii monasterii cartusienensis.

Congregato capitulo venerabilis monasterii Sanctorum Hieronimi et Bernardi ordinis cartusienensis, in quo affuerunt primo reverendus pater dominus domnus Antonio Surianus vicarius et vice prior dicti loci,

dominus domnus Gulielmus	omnes monaci
dominus domnus Palcidus Ferariensis	professi locum et
dominus domnus Ugo Vincentinus	vocem habentes in
dominus domnus Hieronis de Avantio	dicto monasterio
dominus domnus Gregorius de Semontio	parte ex una,

et magister Bartholomeus Vivarinus pictor habitator Venetiis in contracta Sancte Marie Formose in bancharia parte ex alia convenerunt solemnī stipulatione ad invicem et pacti fuerunt, videlicet quod dictus magister Bartholomeus promisit per se et suos heredes et se solemniter obligavit prefatis dominis monacis, stipulantibus nomine ecclesie dicti sui monasterii, pulcherrime et ornatissime ac laudabiliter construere sive construi facere de lignamine cum intaleis circumcirca et cum uno Sancto Michaelē de intaleo a parte superiori et pingere factis et perfectis coloribus omnibus suis expensis unam palam ab altari deauratam circumcirca flonos auro bono, cum imaginibus beatissime virginis Marie et cum XII apostolorum [sic] et eterno Creatore in trono cum angelis circumcirca et ab uno latere cum imagine Sancti Laurentii, quai altare super quo collocabitur ipsa

pala est dedicatum in honorem Sancti Laurentii, et cum imagine Sancti Stefani ad alio latere ex opposite.

Que pala debeat esset illius magnitudinis ut est alia pala imaginis Virginis picta per ipsum, collocata super alio altari ex opposito in dicta ecclesia. Et promisit meliorare conditiones istius presentis palle ita quod ab intelligentibus laudabitur. Ex adverso prefatus dominus vicarius et viceprior de consensu dictorum dominorum monachorum promisit dare et solvere magistro Bartholomeo tam pro dicto opere fabricando lignamen picture quam coloribus et quibuscumque aliis expensis ituris in perficiendo palam ducatos quinquaginta quri, pacto etc. quod secundum quod ibit laborando in ea pala, ita habeat pecuniam predictam. Quam palam promisit tamen ipse magister Bartholomeus dare et assignare perfectam et complectam omnibus suis necessariis et oportunis in civitate Venetiarum hinc usque ad octo menses proxime futuros, omni exceptione remota. Et voluerunt ipse partes per pactum et ex pacto quod presens instrumentum habeat et teneat eandem vim et robur quemadmodum esset cellebratum in civitate Venetiarum, quia etiam dixerunt concludisse hec pacta Venetiis, submittentre se legibus et partibus ipsius civitatis. Insuper prefatus dominus vicarius et viceprior in presentia mei notarii et testium infrascriptorum desdit et solvit ipsi magistro Bartholomeo pro parte solutionis predictae pale ducatos decem auri. Que omnia etc. promiserunt ad invicem etc. habere firma etc. sub pena etc. Pro quibus omnibus etc.

Andrea filius Iohannis Zavatini

de Porcilia

Matheus filius quondam Dominici Zimafiori

Abbreviations

ASV - Archivio di Stato di Venezia

ASPV - Archivio Storico del Patriarcato di Venezia

BMC - Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venezia

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ASV

Arti, b.710.

Avogaria di Comun, Balla d'Oro, reg. 162/I; 163/II; reg. 164/III; *ibid.* Cronaca Matrimoni, reg. 107 / 2 ; *ibid.* Matrimoni patrizi per nome di donna, schede; *ibid.* Martimoni con notizie dei figli, schede; *ibid.* Misc. civile e penale, C 73, C 330.

Bernardo-Giuna (Archivio Privato), bb. 1-4.

Dieci Savi sopra le Decime in Rialto, b. 16.

Direzione Dipartimentale del Demanio (1806-13), b. 321; b. 328; b. 390; b. 419; b. 421; b.423; *ibid.* Scuole Piccole, b. 306; b. 382; b.424; b.426; b.433.

Inquisitori di Stato, b. 909

Maggior Consiglio, Reg. Leona.

Mat. Ecclesiastica, Sant'Andrea del Lido, bb. 2-3; b. 9; b. 37; b. 44; b. 49; bb.50-2.

Mat. Ecclesiastica, SS Giovanni e Paolo, b. D, fasc. XI, XII, XIII; b. L, fasc. II.

Mat. Ecclesiastica, S.Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, b. 1; bb. 3-6; b. 101; b. 106; b. 129

Mat. Ecclesiastica, San Michele in Isola, b. 2; b. 4.

Misc. Codici I: Storia Veneta, 17-23 (Barbaro, M. *Arbori de 'patritti veneti*).

Procuratori di San Marco, de Citra (Commissarie), b. 67; b. 134; b. 319; b. 322.

Procuratori di San Marco, Misti, b. 121 A.

Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista, b. 12

Scuola Grande di San Marco, bb. 4-5; b. 11; b. 16 bis.

Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Misericordia (Valverde), b. 5.

Sezione Notarile (sez. not.), Testamenti, b. 46; b. 52; b. 55/d; b. 86; b. 167; bb. 202-3; b. 479; b. 482; b. 506; b. 675; b. 677; b. 823; bb. 955-57; b. 1023; b. 1062; b. 1149; b. 1183; b. 1185; b. 1216 / III; b. 1227; bb. 1229-30; b. 1239; b. 1420.

Archivio Parrocchiale di San Giovanni in Bragora

b. 1.

ASPV

Congregazione del Clero, S. Maria Formosa, b. 13 [65? (*sic*) & 66]; S. Maria Formosa, b. 14 [67-68]

BMC

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Classe IV (Mariegole), 3 (S. Stefano Protomartire); 117 (San Rocco e San Nicolò); 150-51 (Tagliapietra); 194 (Sabioneri).

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Stampe C2, no. 28.

Save Venice Inc.

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Mariegola Maior

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